

Caused to Believe

THE DOUBTING THOMAS STORY

AS THE CLIMAX OF JOHN'S

CHRISTOLOGICAL NARRATIVE



BY

WILLIAM BONNEY

CAUSED TO BELIEVE

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION SERIES

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*The Doubting Thomas Story at the Climax of
John's Christological Narrative*

BY

WILLIAM BONNEY



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CHAPTER ONE

JESUS AS THE FOCUS OF THE THOMAS STORY

One of the most well known New Testament stories is John's unique account of the apostle Thomas' unbelieving reaction to the news that Jesus is risen from the dead (Jn. 20:24–29). This story follows John's narrations of two appearances of the risen Jesus. In the first, he appears to Mary Magdalene outside of the empty tomb. In the second, he appears to his disciples, with the exception of Thomas, as they are gathered together in a room behind locked doors. When Thomas rejoins his fellow disciples they tell him, “We have seen the Lord” (20:25). Upon hearing their testimony, Thomas states, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe” (20:25).

One week later, Jesus appears for a third time, again to his disciples gathered behind closed doors, but this time Thomas is present. Jesus, apparently familiar with the doubter's statement, addresses him with a command that echoes his words of disbelief, “Bring your finger here and see my hands; and bring your hand here and place it in my side; do not continue to be faithless but believing” (20:27). After seeing Jesus, Thomas believes, confessing him to be his “Lord” and his “God” (20:28). Jesus responds: “Because you have seen me you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen me and believe” (20:29).

Jesus' comment on Thomas' conversion and its close connection to the beatitude he subsequently pronounces upon those who believe without recourse to visual evidence have long served as the locus around which this passage has been and continues to be interpreted. Thomas, now branded “Doubting Thomas,” the infamous avatar of unbelief, is thought to serve as a foil to those who will believe according to the proper protocol and base their faith on the word alone.¹

¹ Such interpretations are evidenced in the very earliest comments on the passage. See, for example, Clement (*Strom.*, ii. 2). He argues that sensation is not the

The story has come to be seen as a warning that it is wrong to require supernatural demonstrations of divine power as a basis for one's faith. Interpreters have made the actions of Thomas the focus of this passage that has come to be understood as a lesson on how one should attain faith in Jesus.

The purpose of this book is to demonstrate that the passage has a different locus of interpretation, that being Jesus and his actions rather than Thomas and his. The central point of this pericope is the source and object of faith, rather than the method by which faith is attained. Thomas' actions give the reader an opportunity to learn something about Jesus. This book will show that a focus on Jesus gains ascendancy over a focus on Thomas when one reads the passage within the context of the gospel as a literary whole. As in all well-constructed literary works, the Gospel of John follows a plan, and the present study shall attempt to bring to light how the story of Thomas fits into this plan.

John's Tripartite Narrative Structure

How one views the structural makeup of the gospel can significantly influence one's interpretation of individual passages within that structure. The gospel has long been divided according to a two-part structure. Chapters 1 through 12, in which Jesus travels the Judean countryside preaching and performing miraculous signs have been called "The Book of Signs." The remainder of the book, which deals principally with his passion, death and resurrection, has been called the "The Book of Glory."² This structural division has one serious

root of faith and produces as proof the beatitude of Jn. 20:29. Both Origen and Tertullian classify faith based on the word to be worthy of a "greater" blessing than faith based on sight. See Origen (*Comm. on Jn.*, 10, 27) and Tertullian (*Res.*, 33). Calvin provides a similar interpretation, stating that sense experience is "inconsistent with the nature of faith." See *Calvin's commentary on John*, 20, 29. Many modern commentators agree that the point of this narrative is to warn against basing one's faith on miraculous, physical demonstrations. See, for example: Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 696 and Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, Vol. 3, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 330–331.

² These are the designations of Raymond E. Brown. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel of John I–XII*, The Anchor Bible. Vol. 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), cxxxviii–cxxxix. We agree with Giblin that the titles "The Book of Signs" and "The Book of Glory" are imprecise, especially when one considers that John specifically

flaw. Directly following Jesus' appearance to Thomas, John writes, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples . . . but these are written that you may believe . . ." (20:30-31). Clearly, John considers Jesus' resurrection appearances, the ultimate revelation of Jesus' "glory," to be "signs." Furthermore, by separating Jesus' signs from his glory, this structural division can cause readers to devalue Jesus' signs and can bolster those theories that view a faith based upon supernatural demonstrations to be of an inferior sort.

Recently, however, Charles H. Giblin has demonstrated that John's narrative should be read in the light of a more telling three-part framework through which the book's major themes reveal themselves according to the course of John's plot line. His divisions are: (1) 1:19 to 4:54, (2) 5:1 to 10:42, and (3) 11:1 to 20:29. Close examination of the gospel reveals that the divisions observed by Giblin grow organically out of John's text. Each of the major divisions follows a unique, thematic, unifying pattern. Each revolves around a journey to Jerusalem as its geographical center.³ Each highlights one of the gospel's three Passover feasts as its temporal focus.⁴ Each contains a distinctively Johannine passion prediction (3:10-17; 8:28; 12:20-33).⁵ Finally each division highlights Jesus' relationships with others in a distinct way.⁶ The current study will follow Giblin's divisions, paying particular attention to the types of relationships John establishes between Jesus and others over each of the gospel's three stages.

Jesus Revealed in Terms of Relationships

In order to view, in context, the interaction between Jesus and Thomas in Chapter Twenty, I shall first analyze Jesus' interactions

calls Jesus' appearance to Thomas a "sign" (Jn. 20:30). Giblin admits a two-part literary division under a different thematic rubric, which is complementary to his tripartite narrative structure. See Charles H. Giblin, "The Tripartite Narrative Structure of John's Gospel," *Biblica* 70 (1990): 449.

³ Giblin, "Tripartite," 456.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 457-458.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 463-464.

⁶ Giblin demonstrates that, in the first part of the gospel, Jesus interacts with a broad spectrum of people and encounters no hostility from them in reaction to his actions or words. In the second part, Jesus encounters open hostility from the Jewish leaders, and from among his own followers. In the third part, the lines of division between Jesus and his opponents have been clearly drawn, and Jesus' relationship with those he loves is developed ("Tripartite," 458-459).

with other characters—especially those who seek to understand him. With these encounters John reveals in a relational manner that Jesus has a unique perspective on reality. His is the heavenly vantage point of his Father who sent him (5:20; 6:46). Jesus' interlocutors, who uniformly misunderstand him, share a limited, earthly perspective (e.g., 3:4; 4:11; 14:5).

The reader, however, is given a special point of view with an insight into this difficulty. He or she is given to understand from the start that Jesus' appearance on earth is truly a theophany. In the gospel's prologue, John reveals Jesus as God's Word, God's only begotten son; yet, lamentably, the world, created "through him," (1:3) fails to recognize or receive him (1:11). Over the course of his narrative, John details the reason for this failure. The earthly perspective provides no point of reference against which Jesus can properly be understood. Jesus' full identity can only be understood in reference to a heavenly perspective (cf. 3:31–35).

Furthermore, the members of John's audience learn that the gap between the heavenly and earthly perspectives is bridged by Jesus' initiative alone. Seekers, by their efforts alone, do not discover his identity. Rather, Jesus comes to be known by others only through the experience of his proactive, transcendent action. It is he who comes (1:11), becomes flesh (1:14), gives "grace upon grace" (1:16), and who ultimately approaches Thomas and brings him to belief (20:28). Success as a disciple and the proper apprehension of the mystery of Jesus' identity are necessarily things Jesus "enables" in his followers.⁷ Without exception, he does this within the context of the interpersonal relationships he establishes with them.

This book will also demonstrate that John's text leads its readers to see that Jesus' revelatory action unfolds according to a predetermined schema. John's Jesus intends that the fullest understanding of his earthly activities will come mainly in light of that mystery which is the sign he both performs and becomes in his resurrection (see 2:22; 14:19–20).⁸ Over the course of John's narrative, Jesus' interactions with other characters reveal by degrees a fuller view of who he is and how his identity is not discovered according to earthly criteria but rather revealed according to his own plan, a plan that culminates with the encounter between Jesus and Thomas.

⁷ Ibid., 464–465.

⁸ Ibid., 461.

In the context of Jesus' encounters with other characters in the gospel, over the course of Jesus' historical ministry, the theophanic (and anthropological) themes succinctly explicated in the gospel's prologue gradually unfold. Jesus' encounter with Thomas reveals the gospel's climactic expression of the prologue's central theme.⁹ In this encounter we see one, who despite having been among Jesus' faithful disciples, does not believe. Jesus, nonetheless, approaches Thomas and bids him to change his unbelieving stance to one of belief. Thomas does so and in so doing recognizes that which the reader has seen distinctly laid out in the prologue. Jesus truly is the Son of God, the Word who became flesh. This recognition comes through Thomas' experience of Jesus as truly risen, and this experience comes both as a result of the risen one's will and through his self-revelatory action. The story of Thomas caps off a narrative that, throughout its course, illustrates that faith does not simply result from one's acceptance of testimony; rather, it results from Jesus' direct, willful action.

Method of Analysis

My mode of exposition shall be primarily literary-critical. I mean by this that the context for my interpretation shall be the Gospel of John as we find it, not a specific theological issue, nor the historical milieu in which the text was composed. The principal question I shall ask of the text is: "What does the Thomas story mean when seen in the light of the rest of the gospel?" I do not intend to address the concerns of an historical personage who penned a particular layer of a text;¹⁰ or to scrutinize how the opinions of a supposed

⁹ The focal point of the prologue is humanity's divided response to Jesus' self-revelation. See Charles H. Giblin, "Two Complementary Literary Structures in John 1:1-1:18," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985): 94.

¹⁰ I agree, with most contemporary critics, that the text was not composed in one fell-swoop by a single author. It is plain that the author used sources and that the principal composer's work was subject to later editorial alterations (cf. 21:24). For a clear statement of the historical issues concerning the book's authorship see Brown, *John I-XII*, lxxvii-civ.

Regarding Jesus' appearance to Thomas (20:24-29), scholars virtually all agree that the evangelist composed these verses. See Xavier Léon-Dufour *Resurrection and the Message of Easter*, trans. R.N. Wilson (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), 187-188. See also Brown, *John XII-XXI*, 1031-1032; and Schnackenburg, *John III*, 329-330. Clearly this pericope represents a later stage in John's composition of the resurrection narratives. It assumes the existence of the appearance to

author or redactor differ from those of the sources he might have used. I am principally interested in evaluating the cumulative effect of the words of the gospel, an integrated testimonial, as we today find them.

In the past, commentators have interpreted the Thomas story in contexts other than that presented by the canonical text, and their interpretations have to this day left a lasting impression on the exposition of that passage. Before the advent of historical criticism the passage was often lifted out of its literary context and read solely in the context of one particular theological question or another.¹¹

Today, historical critics strive to situate the passage in a historical context before attempting to assess its meaning. This often means that the expositor recognizes the gospel to be the net labor of several authorial hands, each writing in a different time frame and for a different audience with different historical and theological concerns. Such an expositor attempts to situate the passage in its proper historical stratum and interpret it from its context as a component of that stratum, not from the context of the complete, canonical book.¹²

the other disciples (20:19–23) (Schnackenburg, *John* III, 328). Since the absence of Thomas from the scene of the first appearance to the disciples is not mentioned until (20:24), one can safely assume that the original appearance predates the addition of the appearance to Thomas and was probably taken over from a pre-existing tradition (Bultmann, *John*, 689–690, 693–694).

Most likely the appearance to Thomas represents a very late stage in the composition of the gospel as a whole and is thus incorporated into a fully formed exposition of the evangelist's thought. Two components of the appearance to Thomas make this clear: First, the language of Thomas' confession (20:29) indicates that the writer assumes the high Christology of the prologue. This indicates that the prologue is likely already a part of the gospel. (Little scholarly consensus exists regarding how or when the prologue became part of the gospel. See Elizabeth Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994], 10–25). Second, John gives "Fear of the Jews" as the reason for the disciples' gathering behind locked doors. It is not likely that he found this detail in any source (cf. Lk. 24:36–49). Rather, it appears to fulfill Jesus' prediction of persecution given in 16:2–4, a passage that reflects a later stage in the gospel's development. It seems to have been added to a farewell discourse that originally ended with 14:31 (Schnackenburg, *John* III, 89–93). One can therefore assume with a reasonable degree of certainty that 20:24–29 represents a later stage in the gospel's development.

¹¹ Tertullian, for instance, discusses the passage during the course of his long discourse on the resurrection of the flesh (*Tert. Res.*, XXXIII). One finds another example of such "proof-texting" in the *Memoirs of Odessa*. Here the author evokes Jn. 20:24–29 as evidence that the king of Odessa, who believed without seeing, has a superior sort of faith.

¹² This method of interpretation is best exemplified in the works of Bultmann

Reading the gospel from the historical-critical point of view, nonetheless, remains an important endeavor on several levels. Maintaining a consciousness of historical concerns can serve to help us transpose ideas that might have been tailored to fit the concerns of a particular era into terms that might better fit our own. Historical criticism can also serve as a check against the rigorous literalism often characteristic of fundamentalist interpretations. It can undoubtedly uncover fields rich in prospects for theological speculation.¹³

Still, as valuable as historical-critical methods can be, they sometimes squelch the voice of the canonical text. My choice of a method has not been made out of a rejection of historical criticism. Rather, I have chosen my method as part of an effort to recover an important voice, the one that is heard when the text is read as a whole.

I will not, however, attempt to read the text as if it floats in a vacuum detached from its history of interpretation and the theological questions that that history has evoked. One cannot ignore the rich fuel for spiritual and theological speculation that the gospel as a document of faith has provided believers from the days of its composition to the present. That it prompts and answers such questions is the very reason Christians continue to read it. Nor shall I attempt to read the text without considering the opinions of other interpreters. For it is impossible to deny that these interpretations in some way color the questions we ask the text. This study intends to augment past scholarship, not to ignore it.

I will therefore begin my analysis with an overview of where the interpretation of the story of Thomas currently stands and give brief assessments of how individual interpretations fit into a reading of the gospel taken as a whole.

and Fortna. See D.M. Smith Jr., *The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel: Bultmann's Literary Theory* (New Haven: Yale, 1965). See also R. Fortna, "Source and Redaction in the Fourth Gospel's Portrayal of Jesus' Signs," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970): 151-166.

¹³ For instance, are Jesus' words to the doubter in 20:29 meant to undercut the value of "seeing" as a basis for faith in the gospel as a whole? This is the suggestion of Bultmann. See Bultmann, *John*, 696. Perhaps they are meant to give encouragement to John's readership whose temporal distance from the historical Jesus and the surviving resurrection witnesses might, at the time this verse was composed, have been creating a crisis for new believers. Or, perhaps, as Raymond Brown has suggested, they are meant to illustrate the transition in the type of revelation which is to be productive of faith once Jesus has ascended to the Father (Brown, *John XIII-XXI*, 1048).

CHAPTER TWO

MODERN EXEGESIS OF THE THOMAS STORY

Historical Criticism

The trends of interpretation of the Thomas narrative can be rather loosely organized into two broad groups. On the one hand there are those who see Jesus as the focus of the story; on the other, there are those who see Thomas as its focus.

For the most part, those who see Jesus as the focus of the narrative hold that the thrust of the narrative is apologetic.¹ Thomas' reception of the hard proof he demands, the flesh-and-bone risen Lord, demonstrates the physical nature of the resurrection. Any lesson to be learned about the way Thomas comes to faith is secondary.

The majority of those who have commented on the passage fall into the second group. For these the narrative provides a criticism of the manner in which the doubter comes to faith.² In the story of Thomas, many find evidence that John schematizes, according to a hierarchy, the methods by which one might come to faith. Some go further and connect the soundness of the faith itself to the method

¹ See, for example, Georg Richter, *Studien zum Johannesevangelium*, ed. J. Hainz (Regensburg: Pustet, 1977), 184. Richter theorizes that John includes the story of Thomas in order to substantiate the physical nature of the resurrection in opposition to the threat of Docetic beliefs in or around his community. John's use of stark, corporeal imagery in the prologue (1:14) and the bread of life discourse (6:56) lends some weight to this interpretation. See also C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on The Greek Text* (London: S.P.C.K., 1969), 476. Pierre Benoit also assigns an apologetic function to the text. The Thomas story demonstrates that "the risen Jesus is not a ghost but the real thing." See Pierre Benoit, *The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, trans. Benet Weatherhead (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 284–87. Udo Schnelle also believes the scene is composed out of antidocetic motivations. He believes that Jn. 20:24–29 emphasizes the reality of Jesus' experience on the cross and demonstrates that the cross is not simply one station along Jesus' path to glorification but is integral to it. The revelation of Jesus' glory cannot be seen apart from his cross (*Antidoketische Christologie im Johannesevangelium* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987], 256).

² The majority of commentators, both ancient and modern, concentrate their exposition on this second focus. See notes 1, 11 and 12 in Chapter One.

by which it is founded. A faith based on “seeing” signs is frequently thought to be *inferior* to a faith based on “hearing” the word.³

Viewing the text as a criticism of faith based upon signs gives rise to serious difficulties. Some of the strongest arguments against this view are found in the immediate context of 20:29. In the verse directly preceding the beatitude, Thomas offers the gospel’s most high-minded confession concerning Jesus’ identity. He personally addresses him: “My Lord and my God” (20:28).⁴ Nowhere else in the fourth gospel,⁵ or for that matter in any gospel, does any character make such an explicit confession of Jesus’ divinity. Indeed, Thomas voices the gospel’s climactic articulation of faith. Should the reader view the faith that gives rise to such a confession to be of an inferior sort?

The two verses following the pronouncement of the beatitude serve to increase the difficulty of seeing Jesus’ words to Thomas as critical of his sign-based faith. In 20:30 we learn that the evangelist considers Jesus’ appearance before Thomas and the other disciples to be a “sign.” He states, “Many more signs did Jesus do in the presence of his disciples.” John next categorizes “signs” as things that Jesus did expressly to evoke faith: “These [signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the messiah the Son of God.” If the signs in the gospel are performed to inculcate belief and the appearance to Thomas is expressly called a sign, can it be that Jesus scolds Thomas for basing his belief on seeing this appearance?

³ See Bultmann, *John*, 131, 207–209. Bultmann sees a faith based upon signs as a sort of primer faith that can lead to the fuller faith based upon Jesus’ word. See also Craig Koester, “Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John,” *Biblica* 70 (1989): 327. Koester gives an overview of the opinions of several prominent scholars regarding signs and faith in John’s gospel.

⁴ Thomas repeats the personal pronoun (ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου), emphasizing the profound, personal impact of his experience and thus giving greater weight to his confession (Schnackenburg, *John* III, 333–333). John employs the nominative ὁ in the vocative rather than ὦ. When this usage is found in the New Testament it is generally attributed to a Semitic influence in which “the arthrous Semitic vocative is being reproduced by the Greek nominative with article” (F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961], no., 147). Henceforth I will refer to this grammar as *BDF*. See also Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, trans. Joseph Smith (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1963), no., 34. The Semitic character of the expression emphasizes its relation to expressions of the divine name in the LXX.

⁵ The disciples routinely address Jesus as “Lord” (cf. 6:68; 11:12; 13:6 etc.), but only here does any character in the gospel address him as “God.” Thomas’ confession

The Influence of Bultmann

Rudolf Bultmann, the patronal proponent of a theory of Johannine redaction, sees in 20:24–31 an apparent strain on the coherence of John's narrative. John juxtaposes a criticism of Thomas' sign-based faith (20:29) with a positive exhortation for the reader to come to a faith based upon a narrated account of signs (20:30–31). Bultmann regards this apparent strain on the narrative's coherence to be the result of the author's use of a source that differs from his own view in its evaluation of "signs" as a source of faith. He discerns in the account of Thomas' doubt three literary strands.⁶ The narrative accounts of Jesus' resurrection appearances (20:1–28) he attributes to a source he calls the "passion source." He connects 20:30–31, the statement concerning signs and their faith-evoking purpose, to a "sign source." And the beatitude in 20:29 he attributes to the redaction of the evangelist. Bultmann theorizes that, with the addition of the beatitude, the evangelist means to demonstrate that the miraculous appearances come only by way of a concession to man's weakness. He states: "Fundamentally it ought not to be the sight of the risen Lord that first moves the disciples to believe . . . for [Jesus'] word alone should have the power to convince them."⁷ According to Bultmann, the evangelist adds the beatitude precisely to alter the significance of "signs" as found in his sources. He does so in order to subordinate signs to the "word."

Bultmann dismantles the text, divides it up into literary strata, and then assigns a primary interpretive authority to a particular level. He identifies his authoritative level as the work of the "evangelist," and the other strata he identifies as either "sources" or the work of a "redactor" who did not properly comprehend the evangelist's emphasis.⁸ This method he applies to the entire gospel. A passage

"my Lord" hearkens back to Jesus as his disciples addressed before his resurrection. The two terms, "Lord" and "God" combined go beyond the previous designation and must certainly refer to Old Testament formulations for God (See Ps. 34:23 LXX; 29:3; 87:2; 85:15 LXX). See Schnackenburg *John* III, 332–333, esp. n., 110.

⁶ Smith, *Bultmann's Literary Theory*, 44, 50–51, 222.

⁷ Bultmann, *John*, 696.

⁸ Bultmann has been criticized for delineating the gospel's sources according to theological, thematic criteria rather than literary, stylistic ones. See R. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 16–17. See also the harsher criticisms of

that exalts the value of signs he attributes to a source or a redactional alteration.⁹ A passage that appears to criticize a sign-based faith he attributes to the work of the evangelist.

When this operation is complete, three passages represent the evangelist's authoritative critique of the value of signs.¹⁰ These passages are: 1) 2:23–25, John's comment that Jesus did not trust himself to many who believed after witnessing his signs, 2) 4:46–54, the healing of the royal official's son and, of course, 3) 20:24–29, Jesus' comments to Thomas. I will first examine the healing of the royal official's son (4:46–54).

The royal official seeks out Jesus and asks him to heal his son (4:47). Jesus at first appears hesitant to grant his request. He responds, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe" (4:48). It is only when the official persists, "Sir, come down before my son dies," that Jesus acts. He does not, however, go down with the man but heals his son on the spot. "Jesus said to him, 'Go, your son will live.'" We are then told that, "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way" (4:50). Bultmann asserts that Jesus' statement, "Unless you see signs and wonders . . ." is evidence of an editorial insertion the evangelist makes to his source.¹¹

R. Brown who asserts that Bultmann's opinion regarding the evangelist's critique of his "signs" source is "Bultmann's personal theology" rather than the evangelist's thought (Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 1050).

⁹ The light in which signs are presented is not Bultmann's only criterion for discerning redactional layers. He also considers the gospel's presentation of other themes such as eschatology, as well as its vocabulary and literary characteristics. Literary concerns, however, do not play a role in the passages we are investigating.

¹⁰ Apart from these three passages signs are otherwise presented in a positive light throughout the gospel. See the following: 5:20, 36; 9:3; 10:25–26, 37–38; 11:14–15; 12:37; 14:10; and 20:31.

¹¹ See M.E. Boismard, "Rapports entre foi et miracles dans l'évangile de Jean," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 58 (1982): 361–362. Boismard states that 4:48 indicates a redactional addition by the evangelist to his source. The reprimand, in the second person plural, "Unless you see . . ." is directed not at the royal official, but at those Christians during the evangelist's time who still wanted to experience miracles even though they could not. See also Bultmann, *John*, 206. Bultmann asserts that 4:48 is the evangelist's editorial alteration of his sign source. See also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *John III*, 468–70. Schnackenburg concurs with Bultmann's conclusions regarding the evangelist's use of a source that he must edit in order to correct the notion that faith might be based on seeing miracles. Contrary to another statement in John's text (4:50b), Raymond Brown asserts that the man did not fully believe until he confirmed the miracle with his servant and states that John is not criticizing a faith based on signs as such but rather a faith that focuses on their wondrous aspect (Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 195).

He then reads Jesus' comment as a criticism of those who would base their belief on signs.¹²

Rudolf Schnackenburg accepts Bultmann's basic argument and attempts to augment it. As proof that John elevates a word-based faith over a sign-based faith, he adduces 4:50 stating, "The official believes the *word* of Jesus, as is expressly stated; he sets off for home, full of confidence in this *word* [emphasis mine]. Thus he seems to have attained a degree of faith higher than that of the Galileans, who believe only what they 'see.'"¹³

M.E. Boismard, who also sees 20:29 as a latter addition made to deprecate the value of signs, points out that, although the scene takes the form of a conversation between Jesus and the royal official, Jesus' initial response to his request (4:48) is directed at plural (rather than singular) second persons. He does not believe that John phrases the statement in the plural simply to indicate that Jesus addresses bystanders on the scene as well as the official. Boismard regards the use of the plural as a direct address to the gospel's readers whom John is instructing against a possible wrong-headed desire to see miracles.¹⁴ John's readers must base their faith on the "word."

In the remainder of the scene (4:51–53), the royal official seeks and receives assurance that the healing did indeed take place and at the exact moment in which Jesus spoke. In the opinions of Bultmann and those who concur with him, the evangelist's editorial insertion (4:48) corrects the pro-sign thrust of these verses (4:51–53).¹⁵

The next example (2:23–25) proves crucial to Bultmann's argument that a faith based on signs is a faith of an inferior sort. Immediately following the temple cleansing scene (2:13–22), John states that many who had witnessed Jesus' actions in Jerusalem "believed in his name seeing the signs which he had done" (2:23). But in the next few verses the reader learns what Jesus thought of those who believed in him: "Jesus was not entrusting himself to them, because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in men" (2:24–25).

These are the first characters John presents, other than Jesus' dis-

¹² Bultmann, *John*, 206–7.

¹³ Schnackenburg, *John* III, 467.

¹⁴ Boismard, *Rapports entre foi et miracles*, 361.

¹⁵ See Bultmann, *John*, 204–208; Schnackenburg, *John* I, 466–467, 469–471; Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel*, 245–246.

ciples, who believe in Jesus. Yet, Jesus appears to react negatively towards them. One would expect belief to evoke a positive response from Jesus. After all, in the first chapter of the gospel, John informs his readers: "Whoever received him, to them he gave power to become children of God, to those believing in his name" (1:12). But, to these in Jerusalem who "believed in his name," he does not trust himself. Why not? John gives the reason: "He knew what was in men." What was it in men that failed to elicit the trust of Jesus? According to those commentators who would disparage a faith based on signs, it is precisely that: a faith based on signs. This group, after all, believed on account of "seeing the signs which he had done." According to Bultmann and those who concur with him, verses (2:24–25) derive from the editorial hand of the evangelist and demonstrate that a sign-based belief is flawed.¹⁶

Using the above two examples, Bultmann establishes his hypothesis that John presents to his readers a negative criticism of sign-based faith. Having established this critique, his interpretation of Thomas' doubt flows easily. He sees the passage as a further critique of sign-based faith.

Indeed, according to Bultmann, the evangelist emphasizes the importance of this theme when he situates his warning against a sign-based faith directly before the gospel's climactic verses. "If this critical saying of Jesus forms the conclusion of the Easter narratives, the hearer . . . is warned not to take them to be more than they can be."¹⁷ The narratives are not to be taken as proofs. The experiences of Thomas and the other apostles are not intended to convince the reader of the reality of the risen Jesus. For the reader's own experience of the risen Lord there can be no surrogate. "Rather, they are to be viewed as proclaimed word, in which the recounted events have become symbolic pictures for the fellowship which the Lord . . . holds with his own."¹⁸

According to Bultmann, John wishes his readers to understand that the possibility of an encounter with the risen Jesus is relegated

¹⁶ Schnackenburg, *John III*, 130–131.

¹⁷ Bultmann, *John*, 696.

¹⁸ Ibid. Jürgen Becker also holds that Thomas acts as a negative example of the way to come to faith. Faith, he says, should be based on the "word." See *Das Evangelium nach Johannes II* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1981), 629–631. For a similar opinion, see also R. Cameron, "Seeing Is Not Believing: The History of a Beatitude in the Jesus Tradition," *Forum* 4 (1988): 47–57.

to an experience of hearing the “word” proclaimed, and hearing the “word” cannot properly include any feeling of assurance that some might derive from reading stories of the miraculous as historical facts or proofs. Oddly however, the “word” which Bultmann credits to the evangelist seems somehow ethereal and distant from the set of all the words that John has included in his gospel. Can the text of the gospel itself convey Bultmann’s “word” when this “word” cannot be the words of the text as we find them?¹⁹

Clearly, John’s narrative lays some importance on the appearance of the risen Jesus to Thomas, an encounter that was most certainly out of the realm of proclaimed word. Thomas rejected the proclamation of his fellow disciples, “Jesus is risen.” Yet, Jesus came again, and Thomas came to faith. Bultmann fails to address the significance of Jesus’ act. Even if a modern reader follows Bultmann’s lead and concludes that the physicality of the risen Jesus is mythic and extraneous to the gospel, he or she must nonetheless take seriously the action of Jesus in establishing Thomas’ faith. In rejecting the testimony of his fellow disciples, Thomas rejects the proclaimed “word.” Yet, in the end, he still comes to believe and utters the gospel’s climactic confession.

R. Fortna’s Redaction Theory

A more recent commentator, R. Fortna, takes an approach similar to that of Bultmann, but in his analysis, he states that the evangelist executes not a critique of signs-faith but a critique of the signs themselves.

Fortna has built upon the foundations established by Bultmann and postulates the existence not merely of a signs-source but of a “Signs Gospel” as well. His hypothetical predecessor to the fourth gospel came complete with a passion and resurrection narrative.²⁰ According to Fortna, the evangelist used this source in the compo-

¹⁹ P.J. Judge notes H. Kohler’s complaint that such an interpretation separates faith from the concrete shape of the word. He argues that such an interpretation evacuates the text of any discernible evidence of God present in the word. The faith is thus rendered “life-less” (“A Note on John 20:29,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck Vol. III*, eds. F. Van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett, G. Van Belle, J. Verheyden [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992], 2183–2192).

²⁰ Robert T. Fortna, “Source and Redaction in the Fourth Gospel’s Portrayal of Jesus’ Signs,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 151.

sition of his gospel in such a way that he purposefully created a textual "riddle" for his reader to solve. This riddle results from the ideological clash that occurs when the evangelist placed his own thought side by side with that of his source.

Fortna states that the fourth gospel "confronts us with this strange juxtaposition: earthly signs alongside otherworldly teaching against them, the heavenly revealer of pure Christian theology doing deeds that are frankly temporal and even coarse."²¹ John, according to Fortna, built upon a virtually unchanged collection of miracle narratives. To this collection he made certain editorial emendations. He also added what Fortna calls the "pure Christian theology"²² of the gospel's discourse sections. Curiously, in those cases where the evangelist intended to change the force of his source, as he did with the addition of 4:48,²³ he allowed the source to remain intact and in contradiction to his own sentiments.

According to Fortna, it was not simply piety towards his source that prevented the evangelist from eliminating, or greatly emending, the miracle stories which stood in such dark contrast to his own theology. To the evangelist and his community the miracle gospel was "familiar, indeed greatly beloved;"²⁴ yet, it contained much material which was "no longer acceptable or intelligible and was thus in need of alteration."²⁵ This clash between the author and his Signs Gospel source characterizes a clash between two theological points of view that arose during the formation of the evangelist's community.

Fortna theorizes that the redactional emendations of the fourth evangelist reflect the "pure Christian theology" of the Johannine community after the synagogue rejected it. He asserts that the Signs Gospel he has recovered opens for the reader an aperture into the antiquarian views of Christians when they were still part of the synagogue. The evangelist's historical readership implicitly understood that a tension existed between the later "pure Christian theology" and certain sections of the "no longer acceptable or intelligible" yet "greatly beloved" Signs Gospel of synagogue Christianity.²⁶

²¹ Robert T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 3.

²³ See discussion on Bultmann above.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-10.

The prominence of this tension within the book results from the author's clear intent to illustrate the existence of the problem his historical community had accepting certain parts of synagogue Christianity's Signs Gospel. The evangelist's editorial changes provided for his first audience an authoritative criticism of the offensive theology and served to alleviate the tension that the members of this audience experienced in their own lives.

In their mutual needs to hear this critique, the author's intended historical audience and modern audiences can be said to merge. Fortna asserts that "the aporias, those enigmatic irritants in the text . . . are not roadblocks in the way of a careful interpreter; rather they are keys to interpreting the full text as it stands."²⁷ Today's reader can understand that, if he or she struggles with the idea of Jesus' proving his divinity with miracles, so did the evangelist's historical audience. The modern reader can therefore learn to accept the gospel in much the same way that those readers in the evangelist's time accepted the Signs Gospel.

Such importance does the corrective of the older Signs-Gospel hold for the evangelist's community that Fortna does not see Thomas' confession, "My Lord and my God," as the climax of the gospel. Rather Fortna states that "the episode itself, the entire chapter, indeed the whole gospel—all culminate in this saying from Jesus: 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe'" (20:29).²⁸ With this verse the evangelist tells his audience that their faith is superior to the coarse understanding of Jesus found in the Signs Gospel.

Fortna insists that his redaction-critical method of analysis does not fracture the text into disparate historical strata but rather preserves it as a coherent unity by allowing today's readers to see it in much the same light as that in which its original readers had seen it.²⁹ Indeed, he believes that his method of analysis rescues the text's original unity by allowing the modern reader to see that apparent strains on the text's coherence are not problems at all but rather reflections of the evangelist's historical situation. The true purpose of the gospel is to help readers know that they need not adopt an

²⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁸ Ibid., 246. Fortna translates Jesus' words to Thomas in 20:29 as a question. In this analysis I read them as a statement. See Chapter Six of this book.

²⁹ Ibid., 1–10.

unacceptable mode of thinking in which Jesus is seen as a mere miracle-worker.

For Fortna, the text becomes comprehensible only when rooted in a hypothetical history. According to his hypothesis, synagogue Christianity saw validity in a faith rooted in the miraculous. The post-synagogue Christianity of the evangelist did not. Fortna, however, fails to explain why this should be. He does not connect his hypothesis to any extra-Johannine evidence. Indeed his conclusions seem somewhat anachronistic and appear to flow more readily out of Bultmann's project of demythologization than from any historical accounts of early Christianity.

Fortna's hypothetical history hangs from a tenuous thread. His assertions regarding the character of the community can be based only on two passages (4:48 and 20:29) in a gospel that is otherwise overwhelmingly pro-sign. He offers no historical parallels to help substantiate the existence of his hypothetical community. When Fortna leaves the foundation of the fourth gospel in order to root his sign-critical Christianity in an extra-textual, hypothetical history he builds on less than solid ground. With the present study I hope to demonstrate that the text of the fourth gospel provides its own coherence regarding signs and faith.

Historical Critics Who Believe John Upholds the Value of Signs

Other recent historical critics have recognized Bultmann's conclusions regarding the superiority of "word" over "signs" to be a part of his own theological agenda rather than a part of the message of John's gospel.³⁰ Such commentators as C.K. Barrett, Raymond Brown, and Barnabas Lindars concur that John does not devalue faith simply because it was based on signs. Signs on the whole, they agree, play a positive role in the gospel (cf. 2:11; 4:53; 5:36; 10:37–38; 20:30–31). They are meant to point to the glory shared by Jesus and his Father (5:36). Brown faults Thomas for being taken up with the miraculous nature of the sign of the resurrection rather than looking towards the greater reality to which it points.³¹

³⁰ Brown specifically identifies Bultmann's conclusions as being a part of Bultmann's own "personal theology" (*John XIII–XXI*, 1050).

³¹ Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 1045.

Lindars faults Thomas, not principally for basing his faith on visual evidence, but for his failure to accept the testimony of eyewitnesses. According to Lindars, the members of John's readership learn from this account that they should not reject testimony to the resurrection as Thomas did. They cannot expect to see the risen Lord; but their faith, invariably based upon the testimony of others, is as deserving of beatitude as that of the original witnesses to the resurrection.³²

Barrett too, sees in these verses no criticism of signs as a source of faith. Indeed, regarding Jesus' words to Thomas in 20:29, he states, "The words do not convey a reproach to Thomas; the beloved disciple and Mary Magdalene also believed when they saw. . . . But for the fact that Thomas and the other apostles saw the incarnate Christ there would have been no Christian faith at all."³³ Barrett sees Thomas as "loyal and obtuse" rather than "doubtful" and "hesitating." He is to be compared to those unperceptive witnesses to signs that Jesus encounters throughout his ministry (cf. 2:9; 3:4; 4:48; 6:26).³⁴ According to Barrett, the beatitude Jesus pronounces in 20:29 emphasizes not the failure of Thomas but the continuity between the church and the original witnesses. Both groups share an equal faith.

A recent expositor of this text, P.J. Judge, asserts that the beatitude of 20:29 contains no criticism of Thomas' faith whatsoever. Rather, as Barrett holds, John includes the verse in order to encourage future believers who cannot expect to see the risen Lord. Judge states, "This blessing does not . . . relativize Thomas' seeing."³⁵ The evangelist does not say that the later believers will be more blessed than Thomas; rather, they will receive a blessing equal to his.³⁶

I agree with Barrett and Judge that John's the beatitude of 20:29 serves to encourage future believers rather than to criticize Thomas. The location of the beatitude (directly before John's exhortation to his readers that they come to believe) supports the views of Brown and Barrett that the verse is directed at John's readership and indicates that their faith is equal to that of the original witnesses.

Judge's point becomes especially relevant when seen in compari-

³² Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 616.

³³ Barrett, *John*, 477.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 477.

³⁵ P.J. Judge, "A Note on John 20:29," 2190.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2189.

son with a text in the *Midrash Tanhuma* that is frequently cited as a parallel to the beatitude in 20:29. The text reads, "The proselyte is *dearer* [emphasis mine] to God than all the Israelites who were at Sinai. For if those people had not witnessed . . ." ³⁷ John's text uses the adjectival form "blessed" (μακάριοι), not the comparative "more blessed." Although this text clearly post-dates John, ³⁸ it provides us with a useful point of contrast. John's phrasing does not require that the reader take the verse as a rebuke of Thomas.

This study proposes to move beyond the question of Thomas' role in the scene (20:24–29) and discuss the role of Jesus. I intend to demonstrate that, when the pericope is read in the context of the gospel as a whole, Jesus and his action in enabling Thomas' faith constitute the central issue in this final scene of the gospel.

Historical criticism has predominantly emphasized belief, or the action of the believer, as the central issue of this pericope. ³⁹ This emphasis, although not without merit, has come at a price. For it overshadows the action of Jesus himself which brings about the gospel's climactic response of faith, "My Lord and my God."

Literary-critical Exegesis

The negative evaluation of a faith founded on signs is not unique to historical criticism. Although their methods differ from those of their redaction-critical forerunners, many of those who follow more recent critical trends tend to agree with Bultmann's conclusions regarding the value of signs in John's gospel. Additionally, those who do not concur with his conclusions continue to focus their assessment of the Thomas episode on the relationship between signs and faith. I will now turn to the exposition of 20:24–29 as carried out by some recent interpreters whose "literary-critical" approach differs significantly from that of Bultmann and the other historical-critical exegetes I have thus far examined.

³⁷ Quoted in R. Brown, *John XII–XXI*, 1048.

³⁸ Brown cites 250 CE as the date of composition.

³⁹ As noted above (see note # 1 in Chapter One) several commentators (Benoit, Richter, Schnelle) see Jesus as the focus of 20:24–29. These however see the story of Thomas principally as a polemic against Docetism. In that they hold that the identity of Jesus is the focus of this pericope, their analysis will prove to be more similar to mine than those who see Thomas as the focus of these verses.

R.A. Culpepper

In the past twenty-five years, a growing number of commentators have abandoned the historical-critical approach to exegesis in favor of an analysis of the internal literary features of biblical texts. The publication of R. Alan Culpepper's "Anatomy of The Fourth gospel" has proven to be a milestone in the development of this new movement. He and others in this school view the gospel as a literary unity and analyze it as such. Their intent is to discover the "meaning" woven into the text itself rather than to uncover the theological needs of the author's historical community.⁴⁰ Practitioners of a literary-critical approach tend to discern in the text the voice of one author or narrator (not necessarily the voice of the actual, historical author) and analyze the text according to the perceived unifying patterns provided by this single voice. In the terminology of biblical critics, such an approach is often referred to as "synchronic."⁴¹

Culpepper, and those who have used his analysis as a starting point, tend to agree that the gospel gives signs a positive value in that they are demonstrations of Jesus' and the Father's glory.⁴² Yet they often evaluate negatively a faith based on signs (principally by following the lead of Bultmann and citing as evidence 2:23–25; 4:46–50 and 20:24–29).⁴³ There is, however, an inherent tension in seeing juxtaposed in the same text a positive evaluation of signs and a negative assessment of sign-based faith. Literary critics, in addressing this tension, have no recourse to the redactional-critical sort of solution proposed by Bultmann.

Faced with this juxtaposition of apparently positive and negative evaluations of sign based faith in the same text, many literary critics attempt to find some way to make the text cohere. Culpepper does so by postulating that the gospel contains a complex theology

⁴⁰ See R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of The Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 3–11.

⁴¹ The term synchronic applies to an analysis of the text in its final, unified form. Synchronic is the opposite of diachronic which refers to an analysis of the text's development over time. Historical-critical analysis, such as Bultmann's, is diachronic.

⁴² R.A. Culpepper, "The Theology of the Gospel of John," *Review and Expositor* 85 (1988): 426–427. As proof that John assesses signs positively, Culpepper cites 10:38, "Even though you do not believe me, believe the works. . . ."

⁴³ Craig Koester, "Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John," *Biblica* 70, (1989): 327–330.

of belief in which there are clearly discernible “levels” of faith.⁴⁴ Different characters in the text embody different degrees of faith, some satisfactory and others unsatisfactory. These characters serve as types whose behaviors the reader is encouraged either to emulate or to avoid.⁴⁵ Culpepper discerns three principal levels of faith. The lowest is “signs faith.” The penultimate level is “faith in Jesus’ word.” The highest level is composed of those who “know, love and bear witness.” To substantiate the inadequacy of signs-faith he cites 2:23–24, the beatitude of 20:29, and the crowds “who followed him because they saw the signs which he did” (6:2) but who later abandon Jesus.⁴⁶

Culpepper’s method imports some very difficult problems into the interpretation of the gospel as a whole. First, all of the signs performed by Jesus, including the sign of his resurrection (cf. 20:30), must be assigned a dubious value. According to Culpepper the inadequacy of a sign-based faith is not the result of misunderstanding the sign. The problem is that sign-based faith is inferior. It is only, as Bultmann called it, a “primer faith.”⁴⁷ If it would be better to base one’s faith on words than on signs, then words must be superior to signs as signifiers of Jesus’ identity.

Culpepper does not adequately address the revelatory or signifying capacity of John’s signs. Do they or do they not reveal that

⁴⁴ Culpepper, “Theology,” 426–427. See also Merrill C. Tenney, “The Growth of Belief,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October 1975): 347. He states, “The faith built on spectacular miracles may be valid, but it is not perfect faith.” He asserts that, with 4:48–50, Jesus forced the royal official to prove that his faith was based on his “word” rather than on a miraculous healing.

Tenney fails to address adequately a difficulty the text presents in regard to his view. The evangelist never specifically notes that the man’s faith was a prerequisite to the healing. Tenney does not distinguish that the man’s belief in 4:50 pertains not to Jesus’ identity but to “what Jesus said to him.” John simply states that the man believes that Jesus will heal (or has healed) his son. In 4:53 John states, “He and his whole household came to believe.” This verse appears to pertain to a belief in Jesus’ identity, not to a belief in Jesus’ ability to effect the cure or in the efficacy of his word. The cure itself provided the demonstration of the power of Jesus’ word. John states in 4:53 that the official and his household believe only after they verify the miraculous result of Jesus’ words. The belief of the royal official cannot be easily divorced from the sign’s role in causing his belief.

⁴⁵ Culpepper, “Theology,” 418.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 425–427.

⁴⁷ Culpepper states that although, “the signs confirm that the Father was working through Jesus” (10:28; cf. 14:11), the gospel challenges those whose faith requires signs to move on to a higher level of faith (“Theology,” 426).

which the gospel specifically states it wishes its readers to believe, Jesus' relationship to his father (20:30–31)? In 10:38 we find an unmistakably affirmative answer to this question. There Jesus states, "If you do not believe me, believe the works [τοῖς ἔργοις πιστεύετε], that you may know and understand [γνῶτε καὶ γινώσκητε] that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." Culpepper, who cannot follow Bultmann's redactional-critical lead and say that this verse reflects an older, less mature strata of Christian thought, cannot expunge this irreconcilable tension from his theory.

The results of other synchronically oriented attempts to address the relationship between signs and faith have, for the most part, closely paralleled those of Culpepper.

Craig R. Koester

Craig Koester concludes that, although there is nothing wrong with signs in themselves, a faith based on signs is completely inadequate. For Koester, "signs-faith" is not even a primer faith. Those characters in the gospel whose faith is said to be based on signs consistently fail to move towards a deeper understanding of Jesus.⁴⁸ Faith must be based on the "word." According to Koester, Thomas believes when he sees Jesus because *he had already "heard"* statements that conditioned him to accept Jesus. Koester states, "When Jesus appeared, Thomas confessed that he was Lord and God, reflecting what he had previously been told by the disciples (20:25) and Jesus (14:7)."⁴⁹ His faith is not based *per se* on the "sight" of the risen Lord. The sign acts as a catalyst that awakens a dormant word-based faith. The most obvious weakness of this position is that it contradicts Jesus' explicit statement to Thomas: "You have believed because you have seen me" (20:29).

M. Tenney and D.A. Hopkins

Merrill Tenney, like Culpepper, sees belief progressing through stages. Faith based on signs "may be valid, but it is not a perfect faith."⁵⁰ A perfect faith comes from a personal experience of Jesus and results in dedicated service to the Lord. Unlike Bultmann, Culpepper and

⁴⁸ Koester, "Hearing," 348.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 346.

⁵⁰ Merrill C. Tenney, "The Growth of Belief," 347.

Koester, Tenney does not pit faith in what is “heard” against faith in what is “seen.” “The growth of belief depicted in John’s gospel,” states Tenney, “moves from an initial acceptance of the testimony of another to a personal knowledge marked by loyalty, service, and worship.”⁵¹

Similarly Dennis Anthony Hopkins, a pupil of Culpepper’s, states: “The popular view that faith evoked by his [Jesus] works is categorically inferior to faith based on his words does not have a basis in the gospel.”⁵² He does, however, discern levels of faith in the gospel. Faith based on human testimony Hopkins says is brought to a more mature level through personal contact with Jesus. He gives as an example Andrew, who, after hearing John’s testimony, recognizes Jesus as Rabbi. After a personal encounter with the Lord, however, he recognizes him to be the Messiah.⁵³ In Jesus’ encounter with Thomas John also thematizes the growth of belief. Hopkins states, “Thomas is also like Mary and the ten in that he appears in the resurrection narratives as a character with genuine faith who is afforded by Jesus an opportunity for growth in that belief.”⁵⁴ This opportunity for growth is occasioned by his personal contact with the risen Lord. On the contrary, both Thomas’ own declaration of unbelief prior to seeing the Lord, “Unless I see . . . I will not believe” (20:25), and Jesus’ words to Thomas, “Do not be faithless, but believing” (20:27) contradict the assertion that Thomas believed before seeing. His is not a deepening of belief but a movement from faithlessness to belief.

L.L. Johns and D.B. Miller

Finally, the recent rhetorical-critical study of Johns and Miller calls for review.⁵⁵ They hold that there is no inconsistency in John’s presentation of signs and that the signs universally play a positive role in his gospel.⁵⁶ Emphasizing the forensic character of the gospel,

⁵¹ Ibid., 357.

⁵² Dennis Anthony Hopkins, *A Narratological Approach to the Development of Faith in the Gospel of John* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1992), 249.

⁵³ Ibid., 242.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 211.

⁵⁵ Lauren L. Johns and Douglas B. Miller, “The Signs as Witness in the Fourth Gospel: Reexamining the Evidence,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994): 519–535.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 321.

Johns and Miller assert convincingly that the signs serve as witnesses to Jesus' identity. Unfortunately, their defense of the role signs play in the gospel becomes overzealous.

Their evaluations of 2:23–25 and 4:48 lack any strong evidentiary support. They conclude that those to whom Jesus does not trust himself in Jerusalem (2:23–25) are not criticized for basing their belief on signs but for being “secret believers” in a league with Nicodemus.⁵⁷ This conclusion is possible, of course, but the text itself does not voice what it was about this group that precluded Jesus from trusting himself to them. Even less convincing is the grammatical argument by which they declare that verse 4:48, “Unless you see signs and wonders . . .,” contains no criticism of those Jesus addresses. Indeed they state, “[John] 4:48 may be paraphrased as follows: ‘You must understand that unless you see signs and wonders, you certainly will not believe,’ says Jesus, ‘so I will give you signs and wonders so that you may believe.’”⁵⁸ This analysis misses the fact that, after Jesus' statement, the official repeats his request. He must therefore have understood Jesus' words as a rebuke. Although these verses are not critical of the signs themselves, they do criticize those who demand miraculous demonstrations from Jesus.

Finally, their evaluation of Thomas' demand to see the risen Lord appears to work against their own argument and returns to the traditional split between faith based on either signs or word. Johns and Miller argue that Thomas is rebuked not for demanding to see evidence but rather for demanding “a certain type of evidence.”⁵⁹ Thomas, they say, should have been satisfied with “secondary evidence” of the resurrection, “the faithful testimony of others,” and should not have insisted on seeing.⁶⁰ The distinction between belief based upon signs and belief based on verbal attestation to signs is an over-subtle defense for the value of signs. The rift between what is taken on testimony and what is taken on sight remains.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 529–530.

⁵⁸ Johns and Miller, “The Signs as Witness,” 531. They base their argument on an observation that whenever *ἐὰν μή* or *οὐ μή* (translated in 4:48 as “unless”) appear in the gospel they precede a solemn pronouncement with a positive connotation.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 533.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Conclusions and Proposal for a New Interpretation

According to the above interpreters, John evaluates faith either according to the experience upon which it is founded (signs, word, or personal contact) or by the behavior exhibited by the faithful character (remaining with or abandoning Jesus). There is, however, another way to view “faith” as John presents it. In addition to his clearly stated purpose that his readers come to believe (20:31),⁶¹ John specifies what it is they are to believe. “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” He wishes his readers to accept Jesus as their savior and, as the unique progeny of their God. John makes it clear that Jesus is not to be understood as a mere teacher (cf. 3:1), prophet, or earthly king (6:14–15). Nowhere in the gospel does John express a concern that this belief be transmitted through any particular medium. As for the signs, John specifies that he has recorded them to assist in the achievement of his stated purpose (20:31).

From the outset, John unambiguously reveals to his readers that which he wishes them to believe: Jesus’ identity as their divine Savior. He begins by revealing the unique relationship between Jesus and the Father (1:1, 2, 18). John the Baptist identifies Jesus as “Son of God” (1:34), “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (1:29), and “he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit” (1:33). Long before the reader reaches Thomas’ confession, he or she understands what Jesus’ interlocutors in the gospel have failed to understand: Jesus is the only son of the Father (1:14). The lack of understanding on the part of the characters in the gospel serves only to highlight Jesus’ divinity and to increase the reader’s sympathy towards him. In passage after passage, John illustrates clearly that those who fall short of achieving the sort of belief that he demands at the outset of the gospel (1:12–13) do so not because their faith is founded on the wrong medium of divine communication but because they fail to see what is being communicated (3:12; 8:52–59; 9:41; 10:29–39;

⁶¹ Among the ancient manuscripts this verse has a variant reading. The verb “to believe” (πιστεύειν) appears in both the aorist subjunctive, πιστεύσητε (come to believe), and the present subjunctive, πιστεύητε (continue to believe). This study opts for the present subjunctive reading since the prologue of the gospel indicates an audience composed of believers (cf. 1:14). See the more detailed discussion in Chapter Five (note 4) of this book.

11:47–50; 12:40–43). They fail to perceive that Jesus shares the relationship with the Father outlined in the prologue.

In 6:14–15, John tells his readers of a group that is attracted to Jesus because of a sign he performed. He gives the details of their misunderstanding. They knew that Jesus was sent by God. They called him “the prophet who is come into the world.” Nevertheless, they saw in him a political leader and intended to “take him by force and make him king.” Their response to Jesus is based on a false understanding of his identity.

Another example of Jesus being misunderstood is found in Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus. Nicodemus has seen the signs performed by Jesus and declares to him, “‘Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him’” (3:2). It is only after Nicodemus’ further conversation with Jesus that the reader learns the details of the Jewish leader’s understanding. He cannot accept the idea of rebirth in the Spirit (3:4). Nicodemus’ interpretation of Jesus’ identity, as it is revealed through the signs, is incorrect. As do the Jews in chapter six, he fails to perceive the spiritual reality to which the signs point.

Even Jesus’ adversaries admit that Jesus performs genuine signs. After Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests and Pharisees conspire to prevent Jesus from performing further signs. They ask, “‘What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation’” (11:47–48; cf. 15:24). Acknowledging that Jesus performs signs is not enough. Even acknowledging that Jesus’ signs are enabled by God is not enough (cf. 3:2 and 6:14). The signs can only be properly understood as they relate to Jesus’ identity (5:36; 10:38). Those who do not make the proper connection cannot be said to have achieved “faith.”

Significantly, John also describes a group who are initially attracted to Jesus because of his “word” (8:30) but who later reject him (8:59)! They cannot be criticized for basing their assessment of Jesus upon a linguistic medium but only for their improper assessment of his identity. Whether one is a seer of signs or a hearer of the word, John requires that a follower of Jesus must recognize him to be God’s son, a heavenly person (1:18a; 3:32) who transcends the limits of ordinary human perception. According to John, coming to such recognition involves a transformation, a rebirth (3:3) that enables humans to see beyond merely worldly modes of perception. In this

study I shall attempt to demonstrate that, according to John, it is Jesus' action that enables the transformation that leads to belief.

One can assume that the sign-based faith criticized by Bultmann, Culpepper and others is not the sort of faith which is productive of "life in his name" (20:31) or the status of a child of God (1:12).⁶² If it is not this sort of faith, what, then, is it? To be led by a sign to a belief that Jesus is a mere wonder-worker or a man with the power to obtain some earthly advantage for the Jewish nation would be to believe in one's own imaginary construct and not in the Son of God to whom the signs point. Such a faith would not be a "primer faith" but a false faith in something other than John's Jesus. Nowhere in the gospel does John propose to leave his reader with a scale of faiths against which he or she might judge his or her own faith. Rather he states that his purpose (20:31) is to inculcate in his reader a definitively specified faith, the faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Son of God.⁶³

Each of the expositors we have thus far seen examines faith from the point of view of how it is achieved. Yet, after reviewing their collective efforts, it becomes difficult to anticipate any forthcoming consensus regarding the question they pose: "How do the characters in the gospel exemplify the way in which a person should develop an adequate faith in Jesus?"

For the most part the characters in the gospel, other than Jesus, are portrayed rather flatly. John gives little information regarding

⁶² One interpreter who follows a literary-critical approach, Zane Hodges, takes quite literally John's statement: "But to as many as received him, that believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (1:12). According to Hodges, any character in the gospel who is said to "believe" has achieved "life in his name." Those in 2:23, to whom Jesus is said not to trust himself, are true believers. They are simply untrustworthy. Hodges, however, does not consider in his article those Jews in Chapter 8 who are said to have believed but who are later called "children of the devil" by Jesus. See Zane Hodges, "Untrustworthy Believers: John 2:23-25," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June 1978): 148-152.

⁶³ The juxtaposition of the terms "Messiah" and "Son of God" is also found in the confession of Martha (11:27). There her confession follows Jesus' self-identification as "the resurrection and the life." His raising of Lazarus then confirms his life-giving power. John wishes to ensure that the title Messiah is not understood in the limited sense of the expected Jewish Messiah. Rather, John closely connects the title with Jesus' divine identity as introduced the prologue (cf. 1:3-4, 17-18). See Brown, *John XIII-XXI*, 1059-1060.

Although there is no coordinating conjunction, the titles function almost as a hendiadys in which the two together function as one. Messiah acts as an adjective in relation to Son of God. Jesus is the "messianic Son of God."

their backgrounds, thoughts and motivations. By contrast, John gives his readers significant insights into Jesus' background (1:1–18), his thoughts (11:5, 42), and his purpose (17:1–26). The other characters have long been correctly recognized to serve as types.⁶⁴ Each is the concise embodiment of a broad, loosely defined group that adheres to characteristic ethical or intellectual viewpoints. In their encounters with Jesus, they draw out responses from him and thus dramatically reveal his identity. Their portrayal is neither subtle nor complex. It would therefore be surprising to find that John had built around them an intricate psychology of how one comes to faith. They are not the focus of the gospel; Jesus is.

Realizing that Jesus is John's focus should not, however, lead one to devalue the role played by those characters he encounters over the course of the gospel. As moral types of human behaviors, they can provide John's readers with valuable lessons regarding their own behavior. Yet their behavior is not the point of John's presentation, and one should not therefore expect to find it systematized. One might hope to find in John a systematically definable Christology but perhaps not a psychology of coming to faith.

John writes in order that his readers come to know the identity of Jesus (20:31). I shall therefore examine how John conditions his readers over the course of his narrative in such a way that when they reach the Thomas episode they perceive two things: first, Jesus' identity as the Son of God and second, that it is Jesus who makes himself known in an active interpersonal way. John wishes his reader to understand Jesus in relation to God (1:2) and in relation to humans (1:12–14; 17:6–23) as the active personality behind the Christian faith (20:27).

⁶⁴ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 103–104.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN'S MIMETIC NARRATIVE

The Relation of the Text to its Meaning

Over the course of this study I hope to make clear that hermeneutical issues profoundly influence the varying conclusions of those who interpret the Joannine text. I therefore find it necessary to clarify my own approach and to introduce some of the hermeneutical issues that will arise later in this book. In my analysis, I view the gospel basically as a signifier created by John in order to identify for his readers an object that exists independently of the text. This stance, however, puts this study at odds with the hermeneutical presuppositions of several important, modern critics. Before turning to the gospel text, therefore, I will first lay out the hermeneutical parameters of the sort of literary analysis I will undertake.

Poesis as Mimesis

My approach stresses that the text of John's gospel functions as a work of mimetic poetry that opens to its readers minds an aspect of human existence as the Johannine community experiences it. The gospel's prolog describes the communal experience of an event that the members of the Johannine community proclaim to have "beheld" in their own lives (1:14). John presents this experience as both ongoing and accessible to his readers (20:31). By pointing his readers towards this experience (his text acting as a sign), John may open to the eyes of some of his audience members a previously unknown aspect of their relations to the world. His text, however, does not create this experience. John's text is not meant to generate its own object.

This hermeneutical approach modifies and builds upon two suggestions from a hermeneutical model presented by Paul Ricoeur. The first of these is Ricoeur's adaptation of Gadamer's idea that languages, sets of verbal signs and grammatical rules, undergo changes in order to suit ever-evolving modes of human discourse. This implies

that human experience is not totally dictated by language. Our use of language in the study of a particular object may modify our perception of that object, but it does not strictly limit our ability to perceive that object. Language is not primarily an organ of perception; rather, it is an instrument of discourse. New perceptions are not absolutely dependent upon the evolution of language. Rather, the human desire to communicate new perceptions causes language to evolve.¹

Each instance of discourse between humans focuses, without exception, on some particular subject matter. Language allows a speaker to identify a particular subject and converse with others about that subject.² An understanding between speaker and auditor only comes about when both agree upon the identity of this subject matter. In the case of John this subject matter is a particular community's religious experience, "life" in the name of the Son of God (1:14; 20:31).

Second, I borrow from Ricoeur's analysis of poesis as mimesis. He diverges from the conception of poetical language espoused by those such as Roman Jakobson in which the referential dimension

¹ That languages are at the service of their subject matters is evidenced by the fact that not all languages are the same. Languages develop to suit those purposes for which they are used. If an idea that can be expressed in one language cannot be expressed in another, it is not because different languages are the products of differing linguistic seeds sprouting in their own ways in separate regions of the world and thereby limiting the native speakers' capacities for expression. Rather, separate languages have evolved to suit their particular range of subject matters (See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d revised ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall [New York: Continuum, 1993], 441). If all languages change and all languages are not the same, then human language must have built into it the mechanisms of its own changes. The fact that human language carries within it the capacity to adapt to things, indicates that objects exist to which it might adapt. The structuralist model of language is seriously lacking in regard to human potentialities of expression.

Moreover, users of language need not wait for some protracted linguistic, evolutionary process to complete itself before they can express something new. Language has the capacity to stretch beyond its current limits in the bat of an eye. This capacity for change is most evidently manifested in the poetic use of language and especially in metaphor. Metaphor stretches the commonplace definitions of words in order to open new vistas of meaning. See Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 180. See also, Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 67–70. This elastic capacity of language is clearly evident in John's gospel. Terms such as "bread," "birth," "water," "light," "vine" and "word" etc. delimit a much richer field of meaning than found in their ordinary usage.

² Paul Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics," *Semeia*, 4 (1975): 65–71.

of language is put aside, and the meaning of the message becomes the message itself.³ Ricoeur presents another model of poetry:

Namely, that the suspension of the referential function of ordinary language does not mean the abolition of all reference, but, on the contrary, that this suspension is the negative condition for the liberation of another referential dimension of language and another dimension of reality itself. . . . A new vision of reality springs up, one which is resisted by the ordinary vision tied to the ordinary use of words. It is the function of poetic language to weaken the first-order reference of ordinary language in order to allow this second-order reference to come up.⁴

According to Ricoeur this function is most eminently seen in religious writing. Here, the referents of religious-poetical language are the "limit-experiences" of humanity.⁵ The experience of Jesus living after his death is just such a limit-experience. John uses the Greek language in a new way, stretching beyond previously standing boundaries the meanings of words such as "life," "word," "light," and "water," in order to communicate this experience.⁶

The present study understands the gospel's author to be mimetically representing this experience in such a way that he might direct others towards it. The subject matter that John shares with his readers is the experience of God's son's encounter with humanity. John asserts that this encounter flows from the transcendent action of God (6:44) and asks his readers to look for this action in their own lives. He does not, however, anywhere indicate that the text is meant to generate a theretofore unavailable experience. John uses poetical language to make his readers aware of the human experience of Jesus

³ He quotes Jakobson's "Linguistics and Poetics." "'This function,' he says, 'by promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects'" (Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics," 83).

⁴ Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics," 84.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 108. Here, Ricoeur refers to the limit experiences such as "death" described by Karl Jaspers.

⁶ I diverge from Ricoeur when he intimates that revealing this other dimension of reality is properly the province of poetical works alone. The Christian experience of Christ in history has an independent existence apart from any one, particular instance of linguistic expression. John asserts this in 20:26–29. Indeed, the Thomas episode provides a narrative illustration of this principle. Thomas' faith is grounded on an experience other than that of hearing the testimony that he rejects. The reception of a linguistic message did not create Thomas' experience of the risen Jesus. John, however, does not shy from using poetical language in order to mimic his community's experience of Jesus.

as it is seen from the point of view of his community.⁷ Over the ground of this common experience, that of a new life resulting from the transcendent action of Jesus, John intends to communicate with his auditors.⁸ Through the experience of reading and responding to the text's rhetorical devices the reader is drawn into a conversation about John's subject. The text constructs in the mind of the reader a sign that points to this subject matter. It is the text's action upon the reader in constructing this sign that I intend to analyze in this study.

I have outlined my hermeneutic in order that it might be distinguished from the hermeneutics employed in the works of recent critics who espouse, as this book does, a literary approach in their analysis of the gospel. The tacks they take in their analyses, however, differ considerably from my own. Most prominent among these are R. Alan Culpepper, Gail O'Day, R. Kysar and Dorothy A. Lee. Significantly, each of the above outlines his or her hermeneutic and connects it integrally to the "theology" of the Fourth gospel. I shall briefly sketch the approach of each.

Survey of Other Hermeneutical Approaches

R.A. Culpepper

Culpepper sees the text as generative of a new supra-real subject matter. He states:

⁷ This is not to say that the text is a reproduction of an event. Although *poesis*, in the case at hand, is a form of *mimesis*, it remains *poesis*. That is it generates something new. Ricoeur states, "mimesis does not mean the duplication of reality; *mimesis* is not a copy; *mimesis* is *poesis*, that is, construction, creation. . . . Could we not say that *mimesis* is . . . the Greek term for disclosure of a world" (Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 181). It is something new; yet, it is a type of sign that refers to a reality.

⁸ The ground over which author and reader communicate has long been the subject of hermeneutics. This medium in the days of the romantic hermeneutic was the human psyche. Practitioners of this hermeneutic believed that through the scientific application of historical and psychological tools they could understand a writer's motivations. Their goal was to "understand an author as well as and even better than he understands himself" (F. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutic*, quoted in Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics* (56). See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1993), 522). For structuralists the medium is a deep human grammar, a limited, finite set of grammatical codes of which all instances of speech are manifestations. See Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 92-95.

The gospel claims that its world is, or at least reflects something that is, more 'real' than the world the reader has encountered previously. The text is therefore a mirror in which readers can 'see' the world in which they live. Its meaning is produced in the experience of reading the gospel and lies on this side of the text, between the reader and the text.⁹

Culpepper does not broach the question of whether or not that subject matter relates to some experience that exists prior to or outside of its literary description. However, when he states that what the gospel discusses, "is more real than what the reader has encountered previously," in the same breath in which he states that the text's meaning lies "between the reader and the text" he isolates a unique locus of experience. This experience emerges only in the act of reading the gospel. This runs counter to the idea that the text is mimetic of an extra-textual referent, the Christian experience of the continuing encounter of the living Christ with humanity.

Gail O'Day

Gail O'Day, in her analysis of Johannine metaphor, makes the argument that one should look neither behind nor in front of the text for the locus of revelation. Rather, one should look "in the text."¹⁰ She states that in the fourth gospel "*narrative mode* and *theological claim* cannot be separated."¹¹ It is her contention that the reader is drawn to participate in the text and that in so doing he or she has a revelatory experience.¹² "The reader encounters Jesus . . ."¹³ "through the narrative itself. The narrative is . . . a central element of the revelatory experience."¹⁴

Referring to 20:30–31, she becomes adamant that the locus of revelation lies in the written text alone: "[John] does not say that these were done in order that you may believe but these were *written* . . . [emphasis mine]" She continues:

The locus of revelation does not lie in the myriad of signs and deeds done by Jesus that are not recorded in the text, even if they were

⁹ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 5.

¹⁰ Gail O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 31–32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹² *Ibid.*, 89.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 89–90.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

done before the disciples. Revelation does not lie in the deeds outside the world of the gospel because the deeds themselves are not revelatory (cf. John 20:29). Rather the locus of revelation lies *in* the written narration. . . .¹⁵

Robert Kysar

Robert Kysar takes up a similar line of thought. Following John Crossan's analysis of metaphor in Jesus' parables, Kysar states that the Johannine metaphors in 10:1–18 are "'true metaphors' with poetic power to initiate a new kind of experience. The implied author creates a new reality with these metaphors, a reality impossible without them."¹⁶ Kysar does not state that the metaphors make new uses of language in order to indicate a new experience of reality. Rather, he states that the metaphors are themselves the foundation for the new reality.

This is similar to the assessment of religious language expressed by Amos Wilder. Wilder associates the naming of an object with "calling it into being."¹⁷ This he relates to Ernst Fuchs' identification of the gospel as a "*Sprachereignis*," a "speech-event." The gospel represents "the opening up of a new dimension of man's awareness, a new breakthrough in language and symbolization."¹⁸ He agrees along with Fuchs that "primitive Christianity is itself a speech-phenomenon."¹⁹ Language does not describe a reality; it is the ground of that reality.²⁰

Dorothy A. Lee

Finally we come to the approach of Dorothy A. Lee. In her work, "The Symbolic Narratives of the fourth gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning," she clearly advocates a formalist view of the symbolism in the fourth gospel. According to this view, the literary

¹⁵ Ibid., 94.

¹⁶ Robert Kysar, "Johannine Metaphor—Meaning and Function: A Literary Case Study of John 10:1–18," *Semeia* 53 (1991): 99.

¹⁷ Amos Wilder, *The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 14.

¹⁸ Ibid., 18.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ In order to better perceive this sort of thought, turn to its origins. See Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1977), 143–206.

work becomes its own object and does not signify any other object. Building from this point of view, she affords the text an unusual theological-symbolic significance:

As human beings are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26–27), so in the Johannine view salvation involves centrally the human capacity to image the divine being. This is seen above all in the Johannine Jesus.

The incarnational nature of John's theology is paralleled by the way in which theological meaning is formed and carried by the literary structures of the Fourth gospel. Narrative structures, with their attendant rhetorical devices, are indispensable bearers of meaning, creating a reader and giving rise to faith as an authentic reader response. In formalist terms, such structures cannot be peeled away in order to disclose a pure, Johannine message. Just as *σάρξ* cannot be discounted in John's theology, neither can narrative or symbolic form be disregarded in favor of a detachable view of meaning. In this sense, form and content, in literary terms, parallel the theology of incarnation in the Fourth gospel. Indeed they belong to the same order of reality.²¹

According to Lee, the symbolic language in the gospel, "bears or coveys within itself the realities to which it points."²²

Summary of Hermeneutical Survey

Clearly, none of these models matches my own hermeneutical approach. I hope to establish that John presents Jesus in terms of his relationships to humanity, in order that he might describe just that, the human experience of Jesus. The text is mimetic of the earliest believers' experiences of Jesus as one who enables a new sort of life. It represents this original experience in order that it might lead its readers to find a similar experience of the continued existence of Jesus and of "life in his name" (cf. 20:29).

John makes use of poetical language in order to depict an experience of Jesus in his transcendence that mundane language could not accommodate.²³ The tools of poetical analysis are therefore helpful to the interpreter in analyzing his work. The author of the gospel

²¹ Dorothy A. Lee, "The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 95 (1994): 23–24.

²² *Ibid.*, 29.

²³ Regarding John's use of language to depict the experience of his community, see the enlightening study of Norman Peterson, *The Gospel of John and the Sociology*

should not, however, be considered a creative artist creating art for art's sake.²⁴ Rather the author intends to share with his audience a human experience, not his own artistic response to the world, but the experience of a believing community (1:14).²⁵

Again, what John's gospel presents to its readers is a view to the encounter of Jesus with humanity. The gospel, although it makes use of poetical language, engages in a mimetic presentation of something its author presents as real and normative. The gospel invites its readers to accept its view to this encounter as meaningful in an ultimate sense (cf. 1:12; 20:31) and to live in relation to it.

How the fourth gospel does this, how it acts upon its readers, how it directs them to a view of its subject matter shall henceforth be

of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993). As do I, Peterson views John's language to be tied to the experience of his community. He calls John's special language an "anti-language" (5). This anti-language mirrors the Johannine community's experience of itself as an "anti-society" existing in opposition to the world (18–19, 89–90). For instance, a statement such as "the Word was God" (Jn. 1:1b) "violate[s] everyday language (and logic)" (9). John's language does not build upon a one to one correspondence between symbols and their referents. Rather, linguistic meaning, for the Johannine community, grows out of a negation of these everyday linguistic relationships. John's is the "referent blurring" (62) language of a community whose members come to view their own lives to be transcendent (from a worldly point of view) as they share in the life of the transcendent God. Thus they define themselves in terms of "otherness" or "difference" (89). According to Peterson, "the very identity of [John's] people is dependent upon their being "other," and this is evident in their special use of the everyday language of the society that has rejected them" (89).

²⁴ See Krister Stendahl, "The Bible as Classic and the Bible as Holy Scripture," *JBL* 103/1 (1984): 3–10. Stendahl reminds scholars that the books of the Bible have gained prominence in society not on account of their character as works of poetical art but rather on account of the authority invested in them by believing communities. He gives the caveat that the Bible is a classic of "scripture," not of "literature" ("The Bible as Classic," 4–6). One, therefore, cannot ignore the fact that biblical texts are recognized as "normative" and authoritative in the communities of belief in which they were created and in which they continue to be used ("The Bible as Classic," 8–9). These texts stake a claim not only on the believer's imagination but also on his or her behavior. To view biblical texts purely as literature is "artificial" ("The Bible as Classic," 6).

I must stress however that it is not illegitimate to adapt the tools of literary criticism as aides to understanding the text. They are the hermeneutical suppositions of those who study art for arts sake that I find incompatible with the study of a religious text that places a normative claim upon its readers. Indeed, the formalist and structuralist hermeneutics were developed to help critics understand the value of art. Both schools of thought recognize that other sorts of writing exist which do not fall under the province of their hermeneutical presuppositions (Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, 111–113).

²⁵ John does not claim a uniquely distinct, personal experience but rather states, "We have beheld his glory."

the concern of this study. I shall examine those literary devices that allow the text to unfold the representation of its subject matter in the mind of the reader. The meetings between Jesus and the other characters in the text reveal not primarily the identities of the other characters but rather reveal how Jesus' identity comes to be known in relation to them. John wishes his readers to recognize Jesus not simply as an object of faith but as that faith's proactive cause and its continuing ground.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOURCE OF LIFE (JESUS PERCEIVED IN RELATION TO HUMANITY)

Giblin's Tripartite Narrative Structure

I have earlier stated my intent to organize my reading of John around the tripartite narrative structure outlined by C.H. Giblin. Being attentive to the gospel's tripartite structure will accomplish two things.

First, it will help to temper any pre-conceived prejudice against the value of signs created by seeing them as separated from Jesus' glory. The traditional bipartite division divides the text at 12:50. Raymond Brown, in his now popular categorization, designates the first book as "The Book of Signs" (1:1–12:50) and the second as "The Book of Glory" (13:1–21:25).¹ He thus locates the resurrection in "The Book of Glory." The evangelist, however, specifies the resurrection appearances as "signs" and links them to the other signs narrated in the gospel (20:30–31).² Indeed, his being (now glorified) and his activity (performing signs) are seen as united in light of this last sign which Jesus "becomes."³

Second, consciousness of a tripartite structure will help us better to perceive how, during the reading process, the subject matter of John's text unfolds, by degrees, in the mind of the reader. When one pays particular attention to the text's narrative movement, especially with regard to Jesus' relations to his close followers and to his enemies, one can better perceive how John hopes to orient his readers' perceptions of Jesus.⁴ Again, a central part of the thesis of this book is that the narrative does not principally give the reader types of discipleship that he or she is to emulate or reject. The various characters who meet Jesus throughout the course of the text serve

¹ Brown, *John I–XII*, cxxxviii–cxxxix. See also Giblin, who notes that Jesus' first sign (2:11) manifests his glory ("Tripartite," 449, n., 2).

² The commentaries are in agreement that the resurrection and post-resurrection appearances are indeed "signs." See Schnackenburg, *John I*, 335–340; Bultmann, *John*, 697–699. Barrett, *John*, 64–65.

³ Giblin, "Tripartite," 449. See also Barrett, *John*, 63–65.

⁴ Giblin, "Tripartite," 450.

not primarily as exemplars of adequate or inadequate faith but as points of reflection against which John's Jesus can be perceived. What the reader learns of those characters who meet Jesus, their shortcomings, their profound misunderstanding of the world and its relation to Jesus, sets in sharp relief both Jesus' identity as a transcendent being and his role as the enabler of faith (cf. 20:31; 15:1–11).

Overview of the Prologue (1:1–18) and Part One (1:19–4:54)

In the remainder of this chapter I hope to demonstrate that, with the prologue and the first of the three parts identified in Giblin's tripartite narrative structure, John conditions his readers in several important ways. He allows them to see that the identity of Jesus will be the focus of the narrative. He also prepares them to read the gospel expecting to see Jesus defined in terms of his relationships to others. In addition, John introduces his readers to several key motifs and structural features which he will employ repeatedly over the course of his narrative.

The first of these motifs is the failure of humanity to comprehend adequately Jesus' divine perspective. I shall explore the development of this theme in the following passages: the prologue (1:10), the call of Nathanael (1:45–51), the temple cleansing (2:13–22), the encounter with Nicodemus (3:1–21), and the encounter with the woman of Samaria (4:4–42).

The second motif is Jesus' transcendent insight into the thoughts of those who do not understand him. This motif we shall see repeated in the call of Nathanael, in the epilogue to the temple cleansing (2:23–25) and in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (4:18, 39).

The third motif is human reliance upon divine action for success in discipleship. This is seen most clearly in the conversation Jesus has with his disciples in Samaria regarding harvesting the fruits of another's labor (4:31–38). The final motif I shall explore in Part One is the independent and self-determined nature of Jesus' actions. Charles Giblin has observed a pattern in John's presentation, "suggestion [to Jesus], negative response [by Jesus], and positive action [by Jesus]," which brings this feature of Jesus' mission clearly into focus.⁵ In Part

⁵ Charles H. Giblin, "Suggestion, Negative Response, and Positive Action in St. John's Portrayal of Jesus," *NTS* 26 (1979–80): 197–211.

One of the gospel, we find this pattern in the wedding at Cana (2:1–12) and in the healing of the royal official's son (4:46–54).

We shall also see that five of the six passages listed above contain either an allusion to or a clear reference to the culmination of Jesus' eschatological purpose (1:51; 2:4, 22; 3:14; 4:23). John trains his readers to see the eschatological manifestation of Jesus' glory, his combined passion and resurrection, as the key events in his mission and tells them explicitly that only through these actions of Jesus will the true understanding of his identity be brought about (2:22).

By the time the reader reaches the risen Jesus' encounter with Thomas, each of these motifs will have been reinforced several times in parts Two and Three of the gospel. In 20:24–29, all of these themes converge. Thomas, who judges from a human perspective, cannot comprehend the news of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus, with full knowledge of Thomas' thoughts, moves to overcome his doubt. As they converge in the Thomas pericope, however, each of these themes maintains its distinct identity. The reader will thus be able to see that the true testimony of the disciples, which Thomas rejects (20:25), relies upon the action of Jesus for its success (20:26–27).

Ultimately, Thomas' faith relies upon his experience of Jesus' faith-giving act not specifically upon either "sign" or "word." I hope to demonstrate that John wishes the locus of faith for his readers to be that same experience of Jesus as living God and cause of faith. John makes this explicit in Jesus' soliloquies and prayer (chaps. 13–17) in Part Three.

Literary Analysis of the Prologue (1:1–18) and Part One (1:19–4:54)

I now turn to an analysis of John's prologue (1:1–18) and the first of the gospel's three parts (1:19–4:54) with an eye to how they condition the reader to understand Jesus' encounters with others. These early sections of John's narrative bear a particular importance, since in them the gospel introduces its narrator and specifies its audience.⁶

⁶ There are myriad descriptive terms that literary critics use to describe the narrators and readers of texts. For example, there are "narrators," "authors," "narratees," "real readers," "implied readers," "ideal readers," and "resistant readers." It is not my purpose, however, to do an elaborate taxonomic analysis of the gospel's narrator and implied reader. I will describe these features of the text only insofar as they pertain to this analysis. In the case of the narrator, my commentary will be brief. In the case of the reader, my commentary will be detailed and run throughout the course of this exposition.

Definition of Narrator and Reader

The terms "implied reader" and "implied author" are routinely used in the analysis of literary texts. The implied author and the narrator are not necessarily the same person. The narrator is the actual voice that speaks to the audience. The implied author, on the other hand, can best be described as the voice, or point of view that gives the text an ideological and stylistic unity.⁷ In some examples of literature, the narrator's voice does not always reliably portray the implied author's point of view. There is no evidence that this is the case in John.⁸ In this study, therefore, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

The implied reader is the person to whom the text implies that it is speaking. Cues in a narrative give the reader the impression that he or she is expected to react in particular ways to certain statements. The text "implies" that its reader be the embodiment of the sort of person who would pick up on these cues and react appropriately. Most often, the implied reader is one who is expected to share the implied author's ideological point of view. Through a variety of rhetorical techniques, literary texts create this ideal receptor in the mind of the real reader.⁹

In the field of literary criticism, both the terms implied author and implied reader refer solely to intra-textual constructs found in works of fictional literature. They do not exist outside of the text nor do they refer to any real objects that might exist outside of the world of the text.¹⁰ The gospel, however, is an ideological text that seeks to impart a normative world-view to its Christian community.

As far as narrators go, it is often the case that the voice of the narrator is a literary device consciously employed by the author. What a text's narrator says about the story and what its author knows about the story therefore may not necessarily coincide. The narrator may be unreliable, misleading the reader or deliberately withholding information. The narrator may be more, equally, or less informed than the story's characters regarding events that transpire in the world of the narrative. For an overview of some of the popular terminology and its application to the gospel, see Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 11–39.

⁷ See Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 73–75; Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 148–149, 216–228; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 15–16. See also Jeffrey Lloyd Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth gospel* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1988), 27–30.

⁸ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 32.

⁹ Ibid., 5–11. See also Staley, *The Print*, 30–37.

¹⁰ Staley, *The Print*, 28–30.

For this reason, neither term can adequately describe the gospel's narrator or its intended reader.

The subject matter of the gospel is not an entity that comes into being solely in the reading of the text. As for the gospel's implied reader, the text itself indicates that he or she has an existence outside the text (17:20–21; 20:31). At the close of the gospel narrative, John directs his readers to believe in a particular object (20:31). Since the narrative comes to a close as it bids its readers to believe, the text itself directs the reader to an extra-textual object. Finally, the narrative itself describes its author as existing outside of the world of the text (21:24). In this book, therefore, when the terms author or reader are used, they will not carry the technical sense traditionally associated with them in literary criticism. When the term “author” (or narrator) is used, it will refer to the voice of John's believing community as it is expressed in the text. Although this voice only finds expression in the text, it remains rooted in the experience of the believing community.

The term “reader,” as it is used in this book, shall bear some similarities to the “implied reader” seen in works of literary criticism. To a certain degree, I shall consider the reader to be formed by the text. I will assume, however, that this reader maintains a certain independence from the text.

Nonetheless, I shall assume that the text does play a role in “creating” its reader in that it builds the reader's ability to understand the text's subject matter. One might refer to this process as competence building. Still, the term “reader” will refer to some person or persons whose existence precedes and continues after the reading of the text. One could possibly endeavor to describe this reader as an implied-real-reader or an ideal-real-reader. For the purposes of this book, however, such a taxonomical effort is unnecessary.

Identity of the Narrator

In his *Anatomy of The Fourth gospel*, Culpepper correctly notes that John's narrator is: a) reliable (that is, the narrator does not try to deceive the audience), b) overtly intrusive (the narrator will give commentary and does not seek to hide his presence), and c) omnivocal (he does not hold back pertinent information).¹¹ Culpepper is only

¹¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 16–34.

partially correct, however, in identifying the narrator as omniscient.¹² The narrator does display insight into the hidden thoughts and motivations of those who encounter Jesus (e.g., 9:22)¹³ as well as the thoughts of Jesus (e.g., 2:21; 6:6, 71).¹⁴

There are, however, limitations on the ability of the narrator to access Jesus' thoughts. John points to these limitations explicitly when he speaks of Jesus' unique access to the Father (1:18; 3:13; 7:29) and implicitly when he notes Jesus' all-knowing character without commenting on the content of his thought (2:25). These limitations to John's omniscience are, in a sense, the author's tacit declaration of his relationship to the one he regards to be his creator (1:3) and the enabler of his faith (15:1–11).¹⁵ The author includes himself among those whose own realities have been transcended by Jesus.

John's Reader

The text of John's gospel, as do most literary works, implicitly defines its ideal reader. Over the course of this book, I shall demonstrate that John does this in several ways. First, the author assumes a certain competence on the part of his reader regarding the language in which he writes his text and its subject matter. Second, as the narrative progresses, John gives his reader new information aimed at further building up this competence. Third, he attempts to persuade the reader to assume a particular stance, or point of view, from which to receive the information in the text.

John, in a sense, attempts to "create" an ideal readership. The text's act of defining its reader is not, however, a process that stops at some point shortly after the beginning of the narrative. As this study progresses I shall attend to the manner in which the fourth gospel continually refines its reader.¹⁶

¹² Ibid., 21–26.

¹³ Ibid., 24.

¹⁴ Ibid., 35.

¹⁵ With his words in 9:41, John clearly states his position regarding the importance of seeing the limitations humans have in regard to their knowledge of the divine: "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say we see, your guilt remains."

¹⁶ See Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, 8–9. Eco asserts that the devices that create a model reader are an integral part of a text, stating, "the pragmatic process of interpretation is not an empirical accident independent of the text *qua* text, but is a structural element of its generative process" (*The Role of the Reader*, 9). This

John's text is designed to unfold in the mind of the reader a certain view of reality. In order to ensure that the proper view emerges in the reader's mind, the text specifies the requirements of the mind with which this view will merge. It prepares the reader along the way with information that will allow him or her to understand what follows. With each new section of the text, John further describes the contours of his subject matter while simultaneously laying the groundwork upon which new information is to be received. If one does not react properly to John's words, if one does not follow his lead, one will never see that which John endeavors to communicate. That is his community's faith-based understanding of Jesus' personal self-communication.

The construction of the text's reader, however, is not accomplished solely by the text itself. John purports to describe a reality in which the reader is asked to believe. The reader must therefore have an experience of the "reality" the text describes. As we shall see over the course of this analysis, John understands belief not merely as the reward due an adroit reader; it is the result of God's will. As the story of Thomas illustrates, one does not believe in the risen Lord simply because he or she is told to do so, no matter how expert the telling is (1:1–21:25). There is another component to faith (6:65).

Detailed Analysis of the Prologue (1:1–18)

The prologue is best understood as John's conscious introduction to the gospel.¹⁷ With the prologue, John works to ensure that his read-

process he stresses does not end at some point near the beginning of the text but continues throughout its entire length.

¹⁷ Opinions regarding the composition of the prologue and its relation to the rest of the gospel diverge greatly. Some scholars have seen the prologue as the creation of the evangelist alone, written explicitly to introduce the gospel. For example, Barrett characterizes it as "a prose introduction which has not been submitted to interpolation and was specially written (it must be supposed) to introduce the gospel" (Barrett, *John*, 126). Others (e.g., Brown, Schnackenburg, Haenchen) view it as an adaptation of a poetical, Christian hymn with prose additions concerning the role of John the Baptist in Jesus' ministry (1:6–8, 15). Some of this second group still regard it as a consciously crafted (though redactional) introduction (e.g., Bultmann, Brown) while others see it as a redactional afterthought that skews the original thought of the evangelist (e.g., Robinson). For a concise summary of these views see Elizabeth Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 18–25. Whether or not the evangelist created the prologue out of whole cloth is not, for this inquiry, an important issue. Rather what I will evaluate is its relation to the rest of the gospel. There is ample evidence to

ers will relate in a specific way to the narrative that will follow.¹⁸ The prologue influences the gospel's readers on three levels that are pertinent to this study: the intellectual, the emotional, and the imaginative. On the intellectual level the reader receives positive information concerning the identity of Jesus as he relates to his Father (1:1–2, 18) and as he relates to humanity (1:5, 10–17). On the emotional level the reader is introduced to the all-important consequences of his or her response to Jesus (1:12–13). Finally, on the imaginative level, the reader is bidden to think in a different way, to take up a new point of view.¹⁹ The text of the prologue accomplishes its work on the reader's imagination in two ways, one through its imagery, and the other through its structural devices. These I shall discuss below. Before doing so however, I will first address John's use of specialized language and its relation to his readership.

Problems with Technical Language

At first glance, it would appear that the prologue introduces certain historical complexities into this study. Foremost among these is the question: What presupposed knowledge regarding the term λόγος does the text imply? This, of course, introduces the historical question of the author's intended audience at the time he wrote the gospel. Since the term λόγος is commonly found in Greek philosophy, one might suppose that the reader must become familiar with the philosophical movement out of which John's thought arose.

Two factors mitigate the necessity of making such a determination. First, to date, no historical parallel to John's usage of the term λόγος can be found either in Judaism or in Christianity. Although it displays similarities with Greek and Jewish thought and most probably grows out of a combination of the two,²⁰ the language of the

suggest (against J.A.T. Robinson, see Harris, *Prologue*, 20) that the body of the gospel and the prologue are integrally related, and each must be understood in the light of the other. I concur with the opinions of those scholars who view the prologue as the evangelist's conscious introduction to the remainder of the gospel. See C.H. Giblin, "Two Complementary Literary Structures in John 1:1–18," *JBL* 104/1 (1985): 87–99. See also Harris, *Prologue*, 189–195.

¹⁸ See David W. Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (Doctoral Thesis, Basle), 1970, 50–53. See also Elizabeth Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 1–17.

¹⁹ Bultmann, *John*, 13.

²⁰ John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 137–162.

prologue does not match the pre-established usage in either.²¹ The author defines the terminology he shares with both Greeks and Jews in a radically new way.

Second, John, with his unique presentation of the term λόγος, assumes no prior knowledge of the term on the part of his readers. The fact that scholars have so much trouble connecting John's presentation of the term λόγος to any other known definition bears this out. John has defined the term well.

The Prologue as an Introduction to the gospel

With the prologue, John lays the groundwork upon which the reader builds an understanding of the entire gospel.²² Over the course of the narrative, the reader will see John's understanding of the basic relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Christian community (as presented in the prologue) progressively clarified until it comes full circle with the meeting between Thomas and the risen Jesus (20:28).

In 1:1–18, the evangelist introduces Jesus as he relates to human origins in terms that transcend ordinary designations. He is called

²¹ The mainstream of contemporary scholarship now predominantly identifies the philosophical background against which the author of John wrote as that of Hellenized Judaism. Earlier hypotheses that John's background was in Greek philosophy or gnosticism have been rejected since the lines of convergence between these systems of thought and the theological point-of-view demonstrated in the prologue contain many gaps. Bultmann had seen many similarities between the prologue and the dualistic Mandaean gnosticism especially in its absolute use of the term λόγος. There are, however, many dissimilarities between the two. The descent and ascent routes of the redeemer, common to all gnostic redeemer myths, are absent in John. Gnostics would not have been able to accept the λόγος becoming σάρξ. Finally, there is no gnostic literature known with certainty to predate John. The examples of gnostic literature Bultmann drew upon might well have had some dependence upon John (See Brown, *John I–XII*, 519–524; Painter, *Quest*, 137–162; Schnackenburg, *John I*, 543–557). As for the prologue's dependence upon the λόγος of Stoicism one cannot overlook the fundamental difference between John's transcendent λόγος and the pantheistic λόγος of Stoicism (See Harris, *Prologue*, 197). Most scholars today would hold that the language of John's gospel inherited its Greek character from Hellenized Judaism. The prologue's view of the λόγος holds much in common with *Sophia* in the Wisdom tradition (Prov. 8; Eccl. 24, Wis. 7–9). There are again, however, considerable differences between the two. For one, John employs the term λόγος a masculine term, rather than σοφία, a feminine term, to demarcate God's creative power. Additionally, strictly monotheistic Judaism could not abide the enfleshment of its God (See Brown, *John I–XII*, 520–524).

²² Giblin notes that the prologue serves as a "literary, thematic introduction to John's narrative" ("Two Complementary Structures," 99).

“the Word” and “the only son of the Father.” The prologue presents him as the personal channel of the Father’s creative and redemptive actions (1: 1–5, 12–14). He is recognized only in terms of this communicative act. Thus, only those who accept this communication, the Christian community (the “we” of 1:14), recognize the Word as God’s son.

The “we who beheld his glory” are those who recognize that the communication they receive through the Word is the personal communication of the Father. For it is only in relation to the Father that his glory is beheld (cf. 5:19). Only in this relation, can the Son, as the Father’s personal communication, be recognized as God (cf. 20:28).

Relation between Structure and Message in the Prologue

The structural arrangement of the prologue significantly augments its meaning. C.H. Giblin has identified two structural features that bear directly on how the prologue orients the gospel’s readers to recognize Jesus as the personal communication of the Father. In each of these structures, the Word is presented in terms of its relationships to others. Formally an overarching XY pattern and an implicit, complementary concentric pattern denote these structures.²³

The X-Y Structure in the Prologue

The X of this pattern encompasses verses 1–13. The Y is made up of 14–18.²⁴ Of the X section, Giblin notes that John discusses the Word (λόγος) in its relation to “third persons.” That is in relation to “God” (1:1–2), “things” (1:3) men (1:4), every man (1:9), “the world” (1:9c–10), “his own” (1:11), “as many as did receive him” (1:12), God’s children (1:12), and “those who believe in his name” (1:12). In the Y section the λόγος relates to first persons, us/we (1:14), we (1:16).²⁵

In the last verses of the X section (1:10–13), John depicts the divided response of the world in relation to the Word.²⁶ In verses

²³ See Giblin, “Two Complementary Structures,” 87–95.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Giblin, “Two Complementary Structures,” 91. There is a corresponding movement from cosmological language in the X section to historical imagery in the Y section following the enfleshment of the λόγος in 1:14.

²⁶ These verses are C (1:10–11) and C’ (1:12–13) in the corresponding concentric structure.

10 and 11 John presents the world's rejection of the Word. In 12 and 13 he describes those who believe and are empowered to become children of God. The three-part movement from: 1) Jesus' arrival in the world and his meeting with all sorts of people, to 2) the divided reception the world gives him, and to 3) his personal relations with the members of the Johannine community parallels the tripartite narrative structure of the gospel. In the first part (1:19–4:54), Jesus interacts with all sorts of people and encounters no hostility from them. In the second (5:1–10:42), Jesus encounters open hostility and "divided responses" towards his words. In the third part (11:1–20:29), the lines of division between Jesus and his opponents have been clearly drawn; here John develops Jesus' relationship with his "friends."²⁷ The appearance of this pattern in the abstract, cosmic language of the prologue prepares John's readers to recognize it as it appears again in the body of the text and to view the remainder of the gospel cast in the prologue's other-worldly light

Also in the unfolding of the X-Y structure, the reader is made ready to see the Son of God defined in terms of his relationships. Significantly, John does not simply describe these relationships in terms of third persons. Rather, he presents them from the point of view from which they have been understood and from which they must be understood: the point of view of the believing community of which the author himself is a member (the "we" who saw his glory).²⁸ In contrasting this "we" with those who "did not know him" (1:10b) and "who did not accept him" (1:11b), John makes it clear that the point of view of belief is the only one from which one can perceive the relationship between Jesus and God.

Thus John indicates that the Son is understood in terms of his personal self-communication as perceived by those who "believe in his name" (1:12). Belief in Jesus' name indicates belief in his unique, personal identity. The believer recognizes in the Son the conjunction of the eternally significant (1:1) and the impersonal (1:3) with the historically significant (1:14a) and the profoundly personal (1:14b).²⁹ He is the Father's only son, who is seen by Christians (the "we" of 1:14) in relationship to themselves as the person who faithfully com-

²⁷ Giblin, "Tripartite," 459.

²⁸ Giblin, "Two Complementary Structures," 88–91.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

municates his Father's saving will. As such the Father's "glory" is recognized in him (1:14b; cf. 5:17; 8:19). As such, John wishes him to be recognized as the one through whom comes all life (1:4) and through whom all is created (1:3). In this relationship, the Word, God's only begotten son, is finally perceived as the personally communicative God (1:1). In 20:28, Thomas comes to recognize this, but his recognition comes only as a result of the Son's communicative action.

Equally important to the reader is the information John communicates through the manner in which he integrates verses concerning John the Baptist into each of these parts (in X, vv. 6–8; in Y vv. 15–18).³⁰ They "have been inserted to show that the communication effected by the Word is conditioned on testimony."³¹ One is thus prepared to see that the evangelist's own testimony in the gospel, a testimony that describes his community's personal experience (1:14), is one that bears personal significance for the reader. John ends the gospel by emphasizing this significance. He exhorts his readers to share in the life to which his testimony points (cf. 20:29–31).

The Prologue's Corresponding Concentric Structure

The second feature noted by Giblin that bears directly upon this study is found in the prologue's implicit concentric structure (ABC-C'B'A'). A is composed of verses 1–2, A' of verse 18. B is composed of verses 3–9, B' of 14–17. C is composed of verses 10–11, C' of 12–13. At the center of this structure stands the world's divided response to the *Logos*.³² Here, in verse 13, John stresses that successful disciples are empowered as the result of the Word's divine freedom (ἐξουσία).³³ This verse directly precedes the verse in which John switches to first person speech (1:14). Thus when John speaks of the "we" who beheld his glory, the reader understands that such

³⁰ John's testimony in each section employs language that befits the "scope" of each. In vv. 6–8, his scope is universal as he bears witness to the "light" which enlightens "everyone" and his coming into the "world." In vv. 15–18, John's testimony is "more personal and historical" for it contains a statement in which John quotes himself. John also refers to Jesus in more concrete terms as "him," the "only begotten from the Father" (Giblin, "Two Complementary Structures," 91–92).

³¹ Ibid., 93.

³² Giblin, "Two Complementary Structures," 94.

³³ Ibid.

vision is the result of the Word's enabling action. The reader will see this theme of Jesus' enabling action underscored over the course of the gospel (4:39–42; 6:12–21; 15:1–8).³⁴ By the time the reader reaches the story of Thomas, he or she will be in a position to appreciate as that narrative's focus Jesus' enabling action towards Thomas, rather than the impious demands of the unbeliever.

The Word's Identity in the Prologue

In the prologue, John gives his readers considerable data concerning the identity of the Word. Having this knowledge, the reader will find him or herself in a position to comprehend Jesus' actions that is not shared by the characters Jesus encounters throughout the narrative. What those characters who encounter Jesus do not know about his identity the reader has already been told. The reader knows that when Jesus speaks, he is not merely a king (1:49) or potential messiah (4:29). Although he is truly both king and messiah (cf. 20:30), his identity as the Father's personal communication transcends the old understandings of both these terms. He is the incarnate *logos*. When the characters in the gospel, both Jesus' opponents and his disciples, do not understand Jesus' references to his place of origin (3:12–14; 6:38–42; 7:35–36; 8:14, 21–22; 14:2–5), the reader does. Placing his readers at this vantage point, John gives them the ability clearly to perceive the gulf that exists between Jesus and his hearers. They will come to understand that it is only through the proactive, personal communication of the Son of God that the gulf is bridged.

Below I shall outline the basic Christological and cosmological information that will prove to be crucial in the author's preparation of his readers. The prologue gives the reader full knowledge of Jesus' divine sonship, his rejection by the world, and the new "life" in which he enables his disciples to partake.

John introduces his readers to God's creative Word (*λόγος*), pre-existent from the beginning of time (1:1), divine (1:1), creator of all (1:3) the source of all life (1:3), the light of humanity shining in the darkness (1:4–5).³⁵ The darkness is unable to grasp (or overcome)

³⁴ Giblin, "Miraculous Crossing," 100.

³⁵ Again, we encounter terminology with parallels in both Jewish and gnostic thought. For example in Psalm 27:1 we find, "The Lord is my light and my salvation. . . ." (Schnackenburg, *John* I, 241). Light and darkness are dominant images

the light (1:5).³⁶ As the source of “light” and “life,” the λόγος remains outside of the “grasp” of humans in both the sense of intellectual knowledge and physical power (i.e. the attempt by his enemies to end his life).

Verses 6 and 7 concern the Baptist’s relation to the light. The reader is informed that John “came to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him” (1:7). With verse 8 the evangelist restates the Baptist’s role as witness a second time and makes clear the relationship between the witness and the light itself. The author assures his readers that the witness’ testimony is not his own but is reliant upon the light itself. “He was not the light but came to bear witness to the light” (1:8).

In 1:9–10 John’s readers learn that the source of true light through whom all creation came to be is not recognized by his creation. Verse 11 poignantly emphasizes this while adding reference to the further tragedy of the creatures’ mistreatment of God’s son. “He came to his own and his own did not receive him” (1:11).³⁷ In the next verse John’s readers learn that some, however, did receive him. They learn what is given to those who receive him, “the power to become children of God,” and that to receive him means to believe

in the literature of Qumran (Painter, *Quest*, 44–45) as well as the Mandaean and other gnostic literature (Schnackenburg, *John* I, 242–243). Its use in the prologue, however, does not presuppose familiarity with any of these usages. Its meaning is clear from the context. The *logos* gives humans knowledge of the way to salvific life amidst a dark world.

³⁶ The verb which the RSV here translates as “has not overcome” is the second aorist of καταλαμβάνω. The verb has various meanings. BDB lists “seize,” “win,” “attain,” “make ones own,” “catch,” “find,” “detect,” “grasp,” and “understand.” Zerwick lists “seize,” “grasp,” “comprehend,” “overtake,” “suppress” (Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981], 285. Schnackenburg prefers “did not grasp,” giving grasp the sense of “understand.” He refers to 1:10 “the world knew him not” to support his argument (*John* I, 246). Origen took the verb to mean “to overwhelm” (per. Schnackenburg, *John* I, 246). Brown prefers to read “overcame,” and gives the verb the unlikely referent of the fall of Adam and Eve (Brown, *John I–XII*, 27). I prefer Schnackenburg’s sense of grasp (in an intellectual sense) as the term’s primary meaning (since this failure is the topic of 1:10) while allowing for a *double entendre* with the word’s second referent being the failure of Jesus’ enemies in light of his resurrection.

³⁷ To whom οἱ Ἰδιῶται refers remains a subject of debate. Brown prefers the Jews (Brown, *John I–XII*, 10). Schnackenburg prefers humanity (Schnackenburg, *John* I, 359–60). Since Jesus historically did appear to the Jews, they appear to be the most likely referent. The cosmological scope of the prologue, however, tells the reader that for John the Jews represent humanity in general.

in his name (1:12). These who receive him are empowered through un-earthly means to take up a new form of life. Their new existence comes neither from nature, nor from the human will (1:13).

In verse 14 John informs his readers explicitly that the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”³⁸ The Word is the only son of the Father. John adds, “we have beheld his glory.”³⁹ With his statement about the Baptist’s witness (1:15), the evangelist guarantees that his readers cannot mistake the divine identity of Jesus (cf. 1:50).

The author identifies Jesus as the source of grace and truth to which believers have access. The comparison to Moses, the lawgiver, demonstrates the unique and absolute nature of Jesus as giver of grace and truth (1:17). Humanity relied upon Moses for the transmission of the gift of the law; it is dependent upon Jesus as the only channel through whom grace and truth came into being. The contrast of Moses and Jesus combined with the notion “grace and truth” (κάρις καὶ ἀλήθεια) evokes the Old Testament covenant virtues *hesed we emet* (ἔλεος καὶ ἀλήθεια). With this contrast, the evangelist emphasizes that God’s Word, through his personal, historical encounter with humanity, enables a new sort of relationship distinct from the contractual bond of the Old Testament.⁴⁰

Finally, John informs his readership that the Son is the sole point of access to the will of the Father (1:18). John’s placement of this sentence behind the comparison to Moses is significant in that even Moses, whose relationship with the Lord was unique in the history of Israel, was not permitted to look upon the glory of God (Ex. 33:18–23).

A reader in possession of the information given in the prologue will clearly perceive the deep gap between Jesus and the world that

³⁸ The evangelist might well have chosen the verb in order to provide, for the informed among his readership, an allusion to the divine tent of dwelling in the desert. See Giblin, “Two Complementary Literary Structures,” 91; Brown, *John I–XII*, 270. Even an uniformed reader could not mistake the overall connection made in the prologue between Jesus and the God of Israel.

³⁹ “We” in this verse most likely refers to the believing community. Bultmann, who saw the prologue as an early cultic hymn adapted by the evangelist, hears in the “we” the voices of believers at a communal, liturgical gathering (Bultmann, *John*, 14). Schnackenburg believes that the “us” among whom the Word had dwelt refers to humanity as a whole; while, the “we” who beheld his glory refers to the apostolic witnesses (Schnackenburg, *John I*, 270). Brown concurs (*John I–XII*, 270). Giblin’s suggestion is preferable. “The subdivisions of v. 14 are too closely conjoined . . . to allow for a different logical extension of ‘us’ in v. 14 to include all humanity” (Giblin, “Two Complementary Literary Structures,” 91).

⁴⁰ Giblin, “Two Complementary Structures,” 90–91.

fails to understand him.⁴¹ This introduction will help the reader clearly to perceive that this gap is only overcome by Jesus' will (17:24) and Jesus' action (17:6; 20:26–27).⁴²

The Prologue's Emotional Claim on Its Readers

As I emphasized previously, the gospel places a normative claim upon its readers. And indeed, it is the ultimate claim. Jesus is the source of "life" (1:4). Participation in this life depends upon one's reception of its source (1:12). With the prologue John calls his readers to be personally affected by the words of the gospel; their lives are at stake.⁴³ The prologue prepares the reader to take with ultimate seriousness the themes of judgment (5:25–29; 12:44–50 etc.) and belief (1:15; 3:36; 5:24; 6:40, 64–65; 7:38; 11:25 etc.) that are woven throughout the narrative. The prologue accomplishes this by eliciting the reader's response to a concrete personal communication (1:12) as experienced by the community of believers (cf. 1:14).

Summary Regarding Prologue

To summarize: in the prologue, John introduces his readers to key terminology and the method by which he will present Jesus throughout the course of the gospel. John does not present Jesus by direct

⁴¹ Besides its function as a literary device, the information the prologue gives the reader concerning Jesus' identity is also a proposition about reality which John's readers are to see explained in the remainder of the book. C.H. Dodd describes this knowledge in terms of a logical proposition in cosmological terms. It is as if that with the prologue the evangelist says, "Let us assume the cosmos exhibits a divine meaning . . ." and with the remainder of the gospel tells his readers "what that meaning is, [how] it was embodied in the life of Jesus" (*Interpretation*, 263–296). In a sense, the prologue is a skeletal collection of cosmological and christological facts to be fleshed out as the narrative progresses. But these are only two of the ways in which John uses the prologue to prepare his readers for what is to follow. The evangelist also sets-up his readers in a particular emotional stance to encounter what follows in the narrative. See also Barrett, *John*, 130. He states that the evangelist intends that the entire gospel be read in light of the statement, "Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος."

⁴² We must keep in mind, however, that this exceptional position of the reader, described by some as omniscient, is limited in the same manner that the narrator's omniscience is limited. The details of the concourse between the Father and Son remain concealed. See David W. Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's gospel*, 50–53. Wead describes the reader's position as "godlike."

⁴³ In 1:14, John emphasizes the necessity of personal involvement as he shifts the prologue from third person language to first person references, to the "we," the group of believers, including the reader, who have beheld his glory. See Giblin, "Two Complementary Structures," 91.

description. Rather he presents Jesus as he has been experienced in history, in terms of his relationship to creation,⁴⁴ and ultimately in terms of his relationship to the Father. Significantly, the author presents the *logos* specifically as the personal channel of the Father's creative activity. The prologue prepares the reader to understand the relationship John will later clarify as Jesus speaks of himself as being sent to do his Father's works (cf. 5:17–23). The prologue clearly identifies Jesus as God's personal communication in a divine person, his "Word," recognized by the Christian community as his son. Accordingly, recognizing Jesus as the Son (or as the personal channel of the Father's communication) will entail recognizing him as God. The confession of Thomas comes full circle with the prologue. John specifies this experience as the Father's personal communication through the Son as witnessed by the community of believers (cf. 1:14). John asks the reader to accept the gospel as the believing community's testimony to the experience of this theophanic communication.

Finally, the prologue introduces the reader to one of the principal motifs I shall investigate in this study: success in discipleship is dependent upon divine empowerment (1:12–13). Understanding this motif, of course, will be key to our understanding of the gospel's focus on the role of Jesus (as opposed to a focus on the role of Thomas) in 20:24–29. In the end, the gap between Jesus' transcen-

⁴⁴ John will further detail Jesus' relationship to humanity as he depicts him in encounters with the other characters in the gospel. Culpepper, too, has noticed that John presents Jesus in terms of his relationships with the other characters in the gospel. He states that one function of those characters who encounter Jesus is to act as foils (*Anatomy*, 104). They are generally flatly portrayed and undergo little development. Their function in the narrative is not to reveal their own characteristics but to reveal the character of Jesus. Indeed, Culpepper states, "They are in effect the prism which breaks up the pure light of Jesus' remote epiphany into colors the reader can see" (*Anatomy*, 104). Yet, he chooses to define the "plot" of the gospel in terms of the faith that the characters do or do not achieve. He states, "Each episode has essentially the same plot as the story as a whole. Will Nicodemus, The Samaritan woman or the lame man recognize Jesus and thereby receive eternal life?"

Culpepper's identification of the secondary characters as foils is correct, but appears to be incompatible with his theory that the plot revolves around these foils (see *Anatomy*, 89). D. Moody Smith also notes that the characters in the gospel serve as the background against which Jesus is perceived. He states: "John's primary emphasis and interest is focused upon his conviction that through him [Jesus] God is speaking to man. The single-mindedness of this theological concept is etched sharply against the background of John's presentation of humanity in all its color and concreteness." See D. Moody Smith, *John* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 51.

dent point of view and Thomas' inability to move beyond his all-too-human point of view (20:25) must be bridged by Jesus (20:26–27). Jesus effectuates this bridging action with his self-communication in the sign of his resurrection.

Repetition of Motifs

With the prologue, John starts his readers off with an informed point of view. He places them in a particular vantage point and prepares them to react to the material that follows with the insight afforded by this vantage point. With the conclusion of the prologue, John's conditioning of the reader is in no way finished. It will continue over the course of the gospel. Each major theme outlined in the prologue will be reinforced both through repetition and through the introduction of new material which further develops that theme. John makes use of this repetition in order "to condition his audience more fully to understand a given motif, theme, or literary device that he has deliberately and repeatedly employed."⁴⁵

Those themes and motifs that John repeats include the following. First, Jesus' activity universally transcends the understanding of those characters he meets in the gospel. Second, the proper understanding of Jesus' identity is not achievable through earthly means. It depends upon the transcendent action of Jesus as the revealer of his own identity as the Son of God. Third, successful discipleship is a condition reliant upon divine action. Fourth, Jesus has an omniscient insight into the thoughts and motivations of those characters whom he encounters in the gospel. And fifth, Jesus establishes his eschatological "hour" (his cross and resurrection) as the determining moment in his mission.

⁴⁵ Giblin, "Suggestion," 202. Culpepper too has noted the repetitive nature of the scenes in the gospel. Indeed, he states, "Each episode has essentially the same plot as the story as a whole" (*Anatomy*, 89). But, since Culpepper is interested primarily in the gospel's "plot" as it regards the faith of those characters who meet Jesus, he does not treat in detail the significance of these repetitions as they relate to the revelation of Jesus' identity.

Wayne Meeks also notes that themes in the gospel are progressively clarified through repetition. Borrowing from the sociologist Edmund Leach, Meeks draws an apt analogy based on the difficulty in sending electronic signals in the presence of background "noise." "[One] must repeat the signal as many times as possible in different ways. From the repeated impact of the varying signals the basic structure which they have in common gets through" ("The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91 [1972]: 48).

In addition to these theological themes, John repeatedly employs several literary-structural features. He uses misunderstandings as a device to reveal divergent perspectives between Jesus and his earthly auditors. He employs the pattern of suggestion, negative response, and positive action in order to emphasize that Jesus acts on his own terms, as the proactive communicator of his Father's will, not on the terms of his human supplicants. Finally, John presents Jesus in terms of his relationships with those characters he encounters over the course of his gospel. In the instances where the characters in the gospel recognize some truth about Jesus, Jesus furthers their insight into his identity through his personal communicative action.

The Baptist Recognizes Jesus

After the conclusion of the prologue, John immediately demonstrates that Jesus' identity is hidden from ordinary perception and that God's transcendent action alone reveals his nature. Humans must be enabled to see, and it is God's self-communicative act that enables them to do so. The Baptist, whose significant connection with salvation history John makes explicit in 1:23,⁴⁶ does not make use of his human interpretive talents when he recognizes Jesus as "the Son of God" (1:34).⁴⁷ Of his ability to recognize Jesus, the Baptist states, "I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water that he might be revealed to Israel" (1:31). He then testifies to a heavenly revelation, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him" (1:32).

The author emphasizes this reliance on transcendent action as the

⁴⁶ Schnackenburg observes that, although Qumran made use of this verse from Isaiah (40:3) to designate the messianic prophet who heralded the coming of the final apocalyptic battle, it is not necessary to look to that community as influencing John. Its usage in Mk. 1:3 and its parallels attests to its widespread significance in early Christianity (See Schnackenburg, *John* I, 291). Again, John's own contextual use of the passage makes the significance of the Baptist's role clear. That he fulfills prophecy indicates to the reader that John the Baptist acts in accordance with a pre-established divine plan.

⁴⁷ "Son of God" (1:34), most likely refers to a messianic king and not a pre-existent divine figure (Brown, *John I–XII*, 64–67). Verse 34 has a textual variant. Several western witnesses read "God's elect one" (ὁ ἐκλεκτός) rather than God's "Son" (υἱός). Brown prefers the former reading as does Barrett (*John*, 178) because of its similarity to Is. 42:1. I tend to agree with who Metzger prefers "Son" based on the "age and diversity of witnesses" and its correspondence with John's theology and vocabulary (*A Textual Commentary*, 172).

Baptist states for the second time, “I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have born witness that this is the Son of God’” (1:33–34).

At the onset of the narrative proper, the reader learns that even John the Baptist, the harbinger of the messianic age, whose coming scripture foresaw (1:22–23), did not on his own recognize Jesus’ significance. His human mode of interpreting the world had to be transcended by the action of God. John here demonstrates for his readers that human perception of Jesus’ divine role must be enabled.

The Call of Nathanael

With his narration of Nathanael’s call (1:45–51), John presents to his readers four programmatic themes:

1) He emphasizes the transcendent nature of Jesus in relation to humanity. John accomplishes this in two ways. First, he stresses that Jesus transcends Nathanael’s expectations regarding the possible geographic origin of the Messiah (1:46; cf. 7:41). Second, with the self-designation he uses in his promise of a further vision (1:51), Jesus communicates a further insight into his identity than that confessed by Nathanael (1:49).

2) John emphasizes Jesus’ omniscient insight into the thoughts of humans.

3) The evangelist emphasizes that Jesus enables humans to recognize him.

4) John makes it clear that a full understanding of Jesus as God’s son comes only from the post-resurrection perspective.

The sequence leading up to the call of Nathanael begins with 1:35. John the Baptist, as he sees Jesus passing by, proclaims to Andrew and another unnamed follower, “Behold the Lamb of God” (1:36). After meeting Jesus, Andrew finds his brother Simon and tells him, “We have found the Messiah” (1:41). The reader receives no explanation as to how Andrew makes the determination that Jesus is the Messiah or why Peter appears to accept this testimony. Apparently he does accept his brother’s assessment for he allows Jesus to re-name him “Cephas.”

The call of Philip and Nathanael immediately follows the call of Andrew and Simon and proceeds in similar fashion. Jesus calls Philip

who seeks out Nathanael and relays to him the following message: “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (1:45)”.

Unlike Peter, Nathanael is not too ready to accept another’s testimony. The geographical information in Philip’s statement gives Nathanael particular trouble and causes him to respond, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (1:46a).⁴⁸ Philip wastes no time quibbling with Nathanael and simply tells him, “Come and see” (1:46b). Jesus sees Nathanael coming, but before Nathanael can begin his inquiry into the Jesus’ goodness, Jesus speaks, “Behold, a true Israelite in whom there is no guile.”⁴⁹ Nathanael questions Jesus’ insight into his character, “How do you know me?” (1:48a). Jesus responds, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you” (1:48b).⁵⁰ Jesus’ insight into Nathanael’s character

⁴⁸ There is no biblical precedent for Nathanael’s critical stance towards Nazareth. Brown suggests that Nathanael’s disdain arises out of a competition between his town, Cana, and the neighboring Nazareth. Brown also notes Boismard’s suggestion that, in light of 7:52, the saying might be an adaptation of another saying against the true focus of objection, Galilee. Brown points to Acts 5:37 as evidence of trouble-making Galilean prophets (*John I-XII*, 83). Bultmann has suggested that Nathanael’s offense at Nazareth is another way the evangelist expresses human offense at the incarnation of the λόγος (*John*, 104). Schnackenburg’s suggests that Nathanael expresses disbelief at the possibility of the Messiah’s having hailed from an un-notable back-water (*John I*, 315). In light of the sparse evidence, however, it seems best to stress no more than the idea that Nathaniel’s concern is of a human, worldly nature.

⁴⁹ Much has been said concerning Jesus’ identification of Nathanael as a “true Israelite in whom there is no guile.” Several commentators have seen here an allusion to Jacob who came with “guile” in order to steal his brother’s birthright (Gen. 27:35), who’s name became “Israel” after he strove with and saw God (32:28–30), and who had a vision of God complete with ascending and descending angels (on a ladder) reminiscent of the vision Jesus promises Nathanael he will see (Jn. 1:51). See Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Jacob Allusions in John 1:51,” *CBO*, 44 (1982): 586–605. Brown has pointed out that it is to “Israel” that John the Baptist came to bring news of Jesus (Jn. 1:31). This suggests the replacement of the old Israel that rejects Jesus with a new, “true” Israel (*John I-XII*, 87). Schnackenburg prefers to see this language as an allusion to Ps. 32, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit” (*John I*, 320–322). The notion of ascending and descending angels does, however, strongly suggest Jacob’s Bethel vision (Gen. 28:12). It remains difficult to assess the certainty of these theories since there is no corroborating, historical evidence concerning this language. Nonetheless, it is certain that John uses the verse to emphasize Jesus’ super-human insight into Nathanael.

⁵⁰ There has been some speculation concerning the fig tree as a possible allusion to Jewish tradition, but none has been accompanied by any substantive evidence. See C.F.D. Moule, “A Note on Under the Fig Tree in John 1:48, 50,” *JTS*

impresses him to such a degree that Nathanael responds, “‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’” (1:49).⁵¹

Jesus then addresses Nathanael and reveals limitations in Nathanael’s insight into his character, “‘Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man!’” (1:51).⁵²

In 1:46, Nathanael’s earth-bound judgment concerning the possibility of a native of Nazareth becoming messiah is confounded by Jesus’ supernatural insight into human affairs. Nathanael has been impressed, but his new judgment of Jesus also proves inadequate. Nathanael sees Jesus in terms of an earthly kingship,⁵³ a judgment

5 (1954): 210–211. See also J. Ramsey Michaels, “Nathanael Under the Fig Tree,” *ET* 78 (1966–67): 182–183. Michaels suggests that here, seated in a collection of Old Testament allusions to Jacob/Israel, one finds an allusion to Hos. 9:10. “Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your fathers.” The suggestion of an allusion to Jacob is attractive. I must agree with Moule, however, that the only certain significance of the statement is Jesus’ supra-mundane insight into human affairs.

⁵¹ Nathanael’s declaration “Son of God . . .” should not be taken as more than a messianic title in the Jewish tradition (see 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 1 Enoch 105:2; 4 Ezra 13:42). Nathanael does not recognize Jesus as the unique progeny of God as John describes him in the prologue. Jesus’ words in 1:51–52 bear this out. See Barrett, *John*, 155.

⁵² An allusion to both Dan. 7 and Gen. 28 seems probable. In this verse, the verb ὁράω moves from the singular (ὄψη) to the plural (ὄψεσθε) of the future, second person. The statement is, therefore, no longer addressed to Nathanael alone but to all present. This suggests to Brown that the statement had, at one time, circulated independently of the gospel. He postulates that, in its original form, it referred to the resurrection but in its present context refers to the ensuing Cana miracle (Brown, *John I–XII*, 88–91). Schnackenburg believes that the vision refers to the resurrection (Schnackenburg, *John* I, 319–322). The precise spot in the narrative to which this prophetic statement refers cannot be determined with certainty. It refers to a further stage of recognition of Jesus as messiah, namely as the divine messiah, a super-human bridge to God.

⁵³ Although “Son of God” could designate something more than a messianic title, it seems unlikely at this point in the narrative. See note above. Gibling has observed that, to this point in the narrative, the titles used by the disciples to designate Jesus’ identity, “Messiah” and “Son of God,” designate earthly leaders. The unique combination of imagery in which ascending and descending angels are combined with “Son of Man” serves to emphasize Jesus’ corrective to Nathanael’s earth-bound perception of himself. The image highlights Jesus’ unique role as the mediator of divine communication. Here, depicted in concourse with heavenly beings, Jesus is seen as the avenue of communication to the transcendent, heavenly reality, the “heavenly gateway,” the “ziggurat” for divine blessings (cf. 1:18; 10:7). With the possible allusion to Jacob (see Neyrey in note below), Jesus can be seen as the one who supplants the mediating role of the patriarchs. See Gibling, “Suggestion,” 206, n. 34.

Jesus quickly puts into question with his reference to the heavenly Son of Man in his glory.⁵⁴ Significantly, Nathanael is given no more than this statement. Jesus does not say to him, “I am God.” No disciple will express the full realization of Jesus’ divinity until after the resurrection. What the reader sees beginning to unfold in this pericope is Jesus’ relationship to humanity.

John gives his reader three key insights into this relationship. First, the reader sees the gap that exists between Jesus’ divine perspective and the earthly perspective. Jesus’ perspective is unique, not only in its access to divine realities (1:51), but also in regard to his knowledge of humanity (1:47). John emphasizes Jesus’ transcendent insight into humans in order to demonstrate effectively the personal mode of his communication (cf. 1:14; 2:22–23; 4:39; 20:16, 27).

Second, human standards of judgment consistently fail to grasp the identity of Jesus, and it is only the action of Jesus (1:47–51) that allows humans to transcend their limited point of view. Although Jesus truly is the “Son of God, the King of Israel,” Nathanael’s limited understanding of the designation must be surpassed with the further vision Jesus promises. Jesus will transcend human insights as he effects the personal communication of his identity in relation to his Father. With the eschatological vision he promises Nathanael, Jesus emphasizes his communicative role as he portrays his future self as the Son of Man in concourse with heavenly messengers (1:51).⁵⁵ Furthermore, Jesus addresses his promise of a future vision to “you” in the plural (λέγω ὑμῶν, ὅψεσθε . . .) indicating its significance for a wider group (cf. 1:14). Nathanael will not be the only one to realize the significance of Jesus’ unique access to heavenly truths. Jesus promises this vision to all who will come to believe.

Third, the reader begins to see the significance of the signs Jesus will work throughout the narrative. Jesus challenges Nathanael’s reaction to his miraculous insight, not on account of Nathanael’s fixa-

⁵⁴ See note above. The statement, although it is no passion/resurrection prediction, might indeed be an allusion to the resurrection. In 8:28 the term Son of Man refers to Jesus in his glory as revealed in the passion-resurrection sequence, “When you have lifted up the Son of man you will know that I am” (Neyrey, “The Jacob Allusions,” 597). The reader will soon be told explicitly that Jesus’ full glory remained hidden to the disciples until after the resurrection (2:22). See also M. de Jonge, “Signs and Works in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Miscellanea Neotestamentica* II, eds. T. Baarda, A.F.J. Klijn, W.C. van Unnik (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 114–117.

⁵⁵ Giblin, “Suggestion,” 206, n. 34.

tion on miracles, but on account of his failure to perceive the true significance of Jesus' actions.⁵⁶ With 1:51 John directs the eyes of both Nathanael and the reader ahead to that time when Nathanael will understand Jesus to be the unique site of communication between heavenly and earthly realities, to Jesus seen in his transcendent, eschatological glory.

The Inaugural Sign at Cana

John concludes his narrative of the wedding at Cana with the words, "This, the beginning of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him." We shall see that, with this inaugural sign, John conditions his readers to receive the ensuing signs. With this wine-miracle narrative, John reinforces a theme with which the reader is already familiar, Jesus' concern for his eschatological "hour." He also introduces a new motif: Jesus' habit of acting to fulfill an apparent human need only after making it clear that it is his own need that causes him to act, not the need of the one who supplicates him. This motif follows a structural pattern that John will present three more times in his narrative; the pattern of "suggestion, negative response, and positive action."⁵⁷

The narrative follows what at first appears to be a strange, contradictory course. When the wine runs out at a wedding attended by Jesus, his disciples and Mary (Jesus' mother), Mary informs Jesus of the problem, stating, "They have no wine." With his response to his mother, Jesus appears to rebuke her and reject her suggestion that he do something about the wine shortage, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come."⁵⁸ She

⁵⁶ This pericope is programmatic since it is the first time John narrates an instance of someone failing adequately to understand one of Jesus' miraculous works. That this misinterpretation is to be corrected by an even more impressive sign (1:51) should give the reader the impression that this gospel is anything but a book critical of signs (at least up until this point in the narrative).

⁵⁷ See Giblin, "Suggestion," 197–204.

⁵⁸ Jesus' response, *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί*, undoubtedly indicates a rejection of his mother's suggestion. Beasley-Murray has suggested that it might be a statement indicating some accord between Jesus and his mother. He suggests as a possible translation, "Why are you speaking to me of this need? With you I understand it" (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 34). The use of this Semitic phrase elsewhere in both the New and Old Testaments (Mk. 1:24; Mt. 8:29; Jos. 22:24; 2 Sam. 16:10; 19:23; Hos. 14:9) precludes such a translation. See Christian P. Ceroke, "The Problem of Ambiguity in John 2:4," *CBQ* 21 (1959): 316–340.

apparently ignores his wish to avoid involvement in the affair and tells the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Jesus, in a seeming reversal of his will, then initiates the miracle with his words to the servants, “Fill the jars with water. . . .” (2:7–8). The quality of the wine causes the steward to remark to the bridegroom, “Every man serves the good wine first. . . . But, you have kept the good wine for last” (2:10).

Interpreters frequently view this passage to be symbolic. The wedding feast symbolizes the old Jewish order that Jesus supplants.⁵⁹ In light of the explicitly mentioned Jewish background of the miracle (2:6) and its placement directly before the temple cleansing (2:13–22), one can see strength in such an interpretation.⁶⁰ It is easy to see the water jars as a symbol of the Jewish nation. They were lying empty after they had been used for Jewish ritual purification until Jesus puts them to a new use. Jesus’ statement in 2:4, however, “My hour has not yet come,” indicates that the narrative has yet a more complex meaning.⁶¹ The end result of the miracle (2:11b) anticipates the further manifestation of Jesus’ glory and its effect on the faith of Jesus’ disciples (cf. 20:8, 16–31).

Jesus’ rather jarring negative response to his mother and his ensuing positive actions cannot help but draw the reader’s attention to the seeming incongruity between response and action.⁶² Charles H. Giblin has discovered in these verses what proves to be a programmatic motif. This pattern of “suggestion, negative response, and positive action” reappears in 4:46 ff. (the healing of the royal official’s son), in 7:2 ff. (the feast of tabernacles), and in 11:1 ff. (the raising of Lazarus). In each of these instances, Jesus receives a request (or

⁵⁹ See Koester, *Symbolism*, 77–82.

⁶⁰ C.H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 303.

⁶¹ Whether or not the verse was added by a redactor, Fortna’s argument that 2:4 was added to change the sense of the original “sign-gospel” draws attention to the importance this verse bears in the overall meaning of the passage (Fortna, *The Fourth gospel*, 55–56).

⁶² Fortna believes 2:4 was inserted to draw attention away from an older portrait of Jesus in which his self-manifestation in signs was primary. The added verse diverts the reader’s attention away from Jesus’ miracles and towards the “hour” of his death and resurrection. He finds it remarkable that the redactor who inserted 2:4 did not suppress the older theme. Thus, the redactor still must have regarded it to be important (Fortna, *The Fourth gospel*, 56). See Ceroke, “The Problem of Ambiguity,” 316–340. Ceroke notes significantly that the ambiguous, “double-line of evidence” appears to be deliberate. One cannot simply explain away the ambiguity by reading τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί as a statement of agreement between Jesus and Mary.

suggestion [7:2 ff.]) that he do something. In each case he, at first, responds negatively to the request, but ultimately he fulfills it.

Giblin notes that, in view of Jesus' foreknowledge (e.g., 13:1; 18:4), it would be incorrect to view these cases as instances of Jesus' changing his mind.⁶³ Rather, these seeming inconsistencies signal the reader to look beyond the mundane concerns of those who ask Jesus to act. In each case, Jesus' negative response signals that he is not interested in the concerns of those who supplicate him. Rather, he acts according to his own concerns. In this case (2:1–11), Jesus' concern is not with the matter at hand. His interest lies not in the shortage of wine but in his "hour" (2:4b).⁶⁴

His hour, of course, does not refer to the time at which he will turn water into wine. Rather, it refers to Jesus' eschatological, revelatory moment: his death and resurrection. With the reference to Jesus' hour, John draws the wine-miracle into the ambit of Jesus' future self-revelation. He, thus, directs the reader's attention not to Jesus' miraculous power but to the future revelation of his identity.⁶⁵ It is in Jesus' "hour" that Jesus will fully reveal his identity, the same eschatological moment to which he referred in 1:51.

With this sign, Jesus has begun to reveal his Father's glory and directly connects it to his "hour." From the prologue, the reader knows that Jesus' glory entails his relationship to the father. This glory is perceived by those who believe, who see him in terms of his status as the only son of the Father (cf. 1:14). The reader begins to see in this programmatic, first sign that Jesus' miraculous acts concern his self-revelation as seen from an Easter perspective. Because John has clearly presented Jesus' glory as stemming from his relationship to the Father (1:14), this sign, as do all those that follow, implicitly points to his identity as God's son. Later, at the climax of his book, with Thomas' confession "My Lord and my God" (20:29), John will explicitly connect Jesus' identity to the glory of his signs (20:30).

⁶³ Giblin gives an overview of those theories that suppose some instability in the will of either Jesus or his Father. Bultmann asserts that in 4:46–54 the royal official convinces Jesus to change his mind ("Suggestion," 198). Lightfoot implies that the Father's will changes in 7:10 when Jesus decides to go up to the feast ("Suggestion," 199).

⁶⁴ See Giblin, "Suggestion," 203.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 203.

Moreover, the pattern of “suggestion, negative response, and positive action” leads the reader to understand that Jesus’ actions do not flow according to human needs. Jesus “never fails to attend to the situation presented to him, but in doing so he acts radically on his own terms.”⁶⁶ John will reinforce this pattern three more times. Thus, when the reader reaches the encounter between Jesus and Thomas in 20:24–29, he or she will understand that Jesus does not act in accordance with Thomas’ desires (20:25b), but rather, Jesus acts according to his own will (20:27b).

The Temple Cleansing

Twice, John has piqued his readers interest as he turns his or her attention towards a future event in the narrative, namely a point at which Jesus’ personal identity and attributes will be more adequately perceived. This event has been anticipated in the call of Nathanael (1:50b–51) and in the wine miracle (2:4b). In this next passage, John explicitly refers his readers to the resurrection and describes that event as the interpretive glass through which the climactic events of Jesus’ life are properly perceived.

Most of the commentary to-date regarding the temple cleansing concerns the chronological position of the action in Jesus’ historical ministry. Most commentators agree that the synoptic account, which places the action late in Jesus’ ministry, is more likely to reflect historical events than John’s account.⁶⁷ It seems improbable that Jesus’ actions in the temple would have produced the tepid response that John describes on the part of the Jewish leaders. Jesus’ actions, significantly more provocative than those in the synoptic accounts (overturning tables and driving out those engaged in fiduciary affairs with a whip), evoke only a question, “‘What sign will you show us . . . ,’” (2:18) and a display of confusion over his answer, “‘It has taken forty-six years . . . and you will raise it up in three days?’” (2:20).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 210

⁶⁷ See Schnackenburg, *John I*, 343–345. Brown, in order to resolve the discrepancy, posits the unlikely scenario of two visits to the temple. One he guesses took place early on in Jesus’ ministry. During this visit he uttered his prophetic words against the temple. The second visit would have taken place towards the end of his ministry. During this visit Jesus would have expelled the money-changers. As in the synoptic account, this second action would have severely provoked the Jewish authorities and precipitated the demise of Jesus (Brown, *John I–XII*, 118).

It is not the purpose of this study to speculate on the historical accuracy of John's chronology. Rather, I am interested in how this episode plays in John's narrative plan, particularly the formation of his readership.⁶⁸ The encounter in the temple does not provoke any opposition towards Jesus; it gives rise only to questions on the part of those who witness them.⁶⁹

Again Jesus' identity is a central issue. Jesus acts in his Father's name, calling the temple "my Father's house" (2:16). Therefore the "sign" he gives for his actions (2:18–19) must be taken as indicating a unique personal relationship to God, the relationship that John's readers know to be perceived by believers (the "we" of the prologue) as Jesus' status as God's only begotten son (cf. 1:14, 18). John's choice of terminology in 2:19 speaks significantly to the character of this revelation. Jesus does not say "destroy this temple" but "destroy this sanctuary" (τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον). The predicted sign will demonstrate Jesus status as the locus of God's presence.⁷⁰ Here, again, the narrative anticipates Thomas' climactic confession.

Jesus' response to the request for a legitimating sign, "'Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up,'" remains enigmatic to all on the scene. The Jews respond by rattling off the temporal, logistical requirements of building a temple. The author's comment in 2:22 informs his readers that the disciples themselves did not understand Jesus' words until he was raised from the dead.⁷¹

⁶⁸ The majority of critics concur that John has deliberately moved the event in order to suit his theological agenda. For an overview, see Schnackenburg, *John* I 344–345. See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 39.

⁶⁹ See Francis J. Moloney, "Reading John 2:13–22: The Purification of the Temple," *Revue Biblique* 97 (1990): 432–452. He sees this encounter as the beginning of the "open hostility" between Jesus and the Jews ("Reading John," 439). Although the Jews ask for a legitimating sign, their reaction cannot be described as openly hostile since they make no threats and take no negative action. Their lack of hostility stands out sharply against the backdrop of Jesus' aggressive act that he begins by making a whip. The confrontational nature of Jesus' actions in John becomes all the more remarkable when compared to the synoptic accounts in which there is no mention of a whip (Giblin, "Tripartite," 458).

⁷⁰ The veiled sanctuary was, of course, that part of the Jerusalem Temple where the divine presence was said to be located.

⁷¹ Bultmann has identified this divergence of perspectives as an example of the "device of misunderstanding" which John had adapted from Hellenistic revelation literature. Whether or not John had adopted this Hellenistic literary device, it is significant that Bultmann recognized this as a motif John employs repeatedly. He lists 2:20; 3:3 f.; 4:10 f., 32 f.; 6:32 f.; 7:34 f.; 14:4 f., 7 f., 22 f.; and 16:17 f. as examples (Bultmann, *John*, 127, n. 1). Each of these misunderstandings occurs

John again reveals a clear divergence of perspectives. It is only the experience of the resurrection that will bring an end to this difficulty.⁷²

F.J. Moloney focuses his interpretation on the contrast between the Jews' request for a "sign" and the disciples' ultimate belief in "the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken" (2:22).⁷³ He asserts that here John presents "word-based" faith as superior to "sign-based" faith. This interpretation misses the significance of the experience of the resurrection as the event that facilitates the proper reception of the word. The entire line reads, "When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken." It is only when they are seen in union with Jesus' eschatological *telos* that the true significance of his signs is perceived.⁷⁴ Only in the light of this event will John allow Thomas to express the gospel's ultimate confession of faith (20:28).

By this point in the narrative, John's readers should understand that a gulf divides the perceptive abilities of the world from the true identity of Jesus. Furthermore, in the instances in which this gap is bridged, it has been bridged only by Jesus' deliberate actions and according to his concerns. In the next passage I shall examine, John reinforces for his readers the concept that Jesus' actions flow according to his own will and no other. In addition to this, John will implicitly communicate to his reader that the knowledge of Jesus' identity transcends the perceptive abilities of both author and reader. Author and reader share in the knowledge of Jesus' identity only insofar as Jesus reveals it.

in a context where Jesus refers to eschatological events concerning his future glorification. They are his resurrection (3:14; 16:16), his hour (4:23), his crucifixion (6:51), the general resurrection (6:39–40), and his ascension (7:33; 14:4).

⁷² See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 39; Fortna, *The Fourth gospel*, 126; Schnackenburg, *John* I, 353; Haenchen, *John* I, 185; de Jonge, "Signs," 111–114.

⁷³ F.J. Moloney begins his questionable analysis by stating that Mary's faith in Jesus' "word" serves as an exemplar of a faith that does not require signs. To justify his claim, Moloney points out that Mary's trusting response (2:5) precedes Jesus' miraculous actions. He then states that John, by placing the wedding at Cana directly before 2:23–25, trains his readers to see the superiority of word-based faith in this episode ("Reading John," 451).

⁷⁴ Bultmann, *John*, 129. See also Fortna, *The Fourth gospel*, 126; Schnackenburg, *John* I, 353; Haenchen, *John* I, 185. See also R.H. Lightfoot, *St. John*, 113. Lightfoot asserts that the resurrection is "the supreme sign of the gospel."

Jesus Knows All Men

Following the temple cleansing comes a short passage (2:23–25) which serves both as an epilogue to the temple cleansing and a transition into Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus.⁷⁵ In 2:23 John depicts the reaction of a large group in Jerusalem to signs they saw Jesus perform.⁷⁶ John writes, "Many believed in his name seeing the signs which he was doing" (2:23b). John then describes Jesus' relationship to this group, "But Jesus was not entrusting himself to them because he knew all, and he had no need for anyone to testify about humans; for he himself knew what was in humans" (2:24–25). Since the members of this group believe after seeing signs many expositors take these verses to be the evangelist's negative evaluation of sign-based faith.⁷⁷ The text, however, does not strictly support such a reading.

Verses 23 and 24 constitute one sentence in which the author twice employs the verb "to believe" (πιστεύειν). In the first instance, he uses it to describe the reaction to Jesus by those who had seen him perform signs, "Many believed in his name . . ." (2:23b). The

⁷⁵ Giblin, referring to the text's historical composition, is unique in recognizing two layers in this addition. He recognizes a double redaction indicated by John's use of two causal clauses one set of by διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν γινώσκειν (2:24) the other by καὶ ὅτι (2:25) (*per* a conversation with Fr. Giblin). Bultmann considers the verses a single "editorial addition, made by the evangelist." The fact that the faith of those mentioned in this verse has been brought about by a sign indicates its "doubtful value" (*John*, 130–131). Schnackenburg, as does Bultmann, sees the verses as the work of the evangelist and not a later redactor. He concurs that the verses bring to light the evangelist's reservations regarding a sign-based faith (*John* I, 357–359). Brown has a similar view (*John I–XII*, 126–127).

⁷⁶ These verses present the reader with a certain difficulty since John has not given any accounts of Jesus performing miracles in Jerusalem. Indeed, in the preceding verses, Jesus seems to resist the Jew's request for a legitimating sign and points only to his future glorification (2:18–19). This mention of signs also falls between the two Cana miracles which John lists as the first and second of Jesus' signs (cf. 2:11; 4:54). Some commentators have thus supposed these verses to be the work of a redactor. The vocabulary and style, however, match those of John. See Schnackenburg, *John* I, 357–358.

⁷⁷ Bultmann, *John*, 206–7. Schnackenburg, *John* I, 358. Schnackenburg sees Jesus' mistrust as a reaction to "an inadequate belief attached to miracles, which Jesus deliberately rejects" (*John* I, 358). Bultmann regards this "sign-based" faith to be a primer faith (*John*, 131). Culpepper sees this as an example of the faith based on signs that never grows into true faith (Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 147). See also Boismard, "Foi et miracles," 360; Koester, "Hearing, Seeing," 332. Beasley-Murray agrees with Bultmann that faith based on signs is only a first step towards a fuller faith. Beasley-Murray does note, however, that this inadequate faith is followed by a discourse on the "redemptive activity of the Son of Man." The flaw is therefore correctable by Jesus (*John*, 47).

subject in this clause is the group in Jerusalem. The object is the person of Jesus. They believed “in his name.” Following this clause comes a participial phrase giving the reason for their belief. They believed “seeing the signs . . .”

The second clause (2:24) follows as a response to the first. In this clause, Jesus is the subject. The group that comes to believe, however, is not the object. Jesus is. “But Jesus was not entrusting himself to them . . .” (αὐτὸς δὲ Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἐπίστευεν αὐτὸν οὐτοῖς). The group of believers is the indirect object of this clause. This use of the verb “to believe” (πιστεύειν) is significant since it is unique to John’s gospel and the New Testament as a whole.⁷⁸ John twice uses the same verb in one sentence but with two different constructions and two different tenses. This indicates a deliberate and careful construction. Jesus’ reaction to the crowd does not strictly reciprocate their reaction to him. John does not say that the crowd trusted Jesus, but Jesus did not trust them. He goes out of his way to say that Jesus did not *entrust himself* to them. John’s meaning is clear. Jesus did not give over any responsibility regarding his own affairs or his own actions to them. The author here emphasizes that Jesus alone directs the course of his own mission.⁷⁹

John delineates a second nuance in meaning in this sentence when he varies the tense of πιστεύειν. In the first instance, with the members of the group who come to believe as the subject, the tense is the aorist. They “believed” (ἐπίστευσαν) after seeing the signs. In the second clause, with Jesus as the subject, John varies the tense. Here it is the imperfect (ἐπίστευεν). With the variation of the tense, John emphasizes that Jesus’ actions are continued, repeated or habitual.⁸⁰ Seeing signs, they believed in him, but he did not go about entrusting himself to them. Jesus’ actions should not, therefore, be seen as a one time response to, or judgment upon, a particular act of this

⁷⁸ Its usage, however, is well attested elsewhere. See Schnackenburg, *John* I, 359, n. 47.

⁷⁹ John reiterates this theme in more explicit terms in the second of his gospel’s tripartite sections. In Chapter Five Jesus compares his witness to that of John the Baptist. There he states that he does not accept the witness of humans, not even that of the Baptist (5:34), but only that of his Father (5:36–37).

⁸⁰ See Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, trans. Joseph Smith (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico), 1963, no. 271. Zerwick notes that when an author uses the aorist and imperfect side-by-side the “mere distinction” between the two allows the writer to emphasize the continuing nature of the actions he seeks to describe with the imperfect.

crowd. Rather, John describes Jesus' continuing or habitual actions in relation to the members of this group. Although they believe in him, Jesus acts independently of them and continues to direct his own affairs.

Using two causal clauses (διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν γινώσκειν . . . [2:24b] and καὶ ὅτι οὐ χρεῖαν εἶχεν . . . [2:25]), John gives two reasons for Jesus' actions regarding this group. Neither of these reasons constitutes a condemnation of a faith based on signs. Rather, each delimits details concerning Jesus' relationship to humans in general. Indeed, each of the reasons John gives tells more about Jesus than that group to which he does not trust himself. The first causal clause concerns Jesus' knowledge of all (διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν γινώσκειν παντὸς).⁸¹ Here, John speaks of Jesus' knowledge as transcending the scope of the immediate situation. Furthermore, the object of Jesus' knowledge is not this group alone but "all." John's argument is therefore not based on Jesus' assessment of this crowd alone but on Jesus' extraordinary knowledge that bespeaks his divine origin.⁸² It is because of his identity, not simply the crowd's response, that Jesus does not trust himself to them.

With the second causal clause in verse 25, John further details the cause of Jesus' action. Here John employs what is for him an unusual grammatical construction in order to indicate the second cause (καὶ plus ὅτι rather than the articular infinitive).⁸³ "Jesus did not entrust himself to them *because* he knew all *and because* [καὶ ὅτι] he needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man." As in the first statement of cause, the explanation is based upon Jesus' personal knowledge. He knows what is in humans, and thus does not need to be told by others what he already knows.

⁸¹ Here John makes use of what is for him an unusual causal construction, the preposition διὰ followed by an article and the infinitive of the verb "to know". See *BDF*, no. 402.

⁸² Knowledge of the hearts of all is frequently attributed to God in the Old Testament (e.g., 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39). See Schnackenburg, *John* I, 359, n. 48. See also Brown, *John I-XII*, 127.

⁸³ John frequently uses ὅτι to introduce causal clauses (cf. 3:21, 23; 5:27, 30, 38, 39, 41, 42; 6:2, 26, 38, 41; 7:7, 8, 30 etc.), but over the course of the gospel he combines καὶ and ὅτι only four times. Once he employs the combination to introduce the second in a series of two quotes (16:17) and three times to introduce a causal clause (2:25; 10:33; 13:3). In each case, the clause introduced by καὶ ὅτι expounds upon an explanation given by a first causal clause regarding the main clause.

John does not directly criticize the sort of faith achieved by this group in Jerusalem. Rather he again expresses the role of Jesus in relation to humanity. John never says precisely what Jesus knows about this group that prevents him from entrusting himself to them. One therefore cannot assume that his reason was that they based their faith on signs. In a later passage, Jesus ultimately calls the members of a group that believed based on his *word* (8:30) children of the devil (8:44). There, as in 2:23–25, it would be wrong to assume that John criticizes the experience upon which faith is founded.

With this passage John demonstrates that the evaluation of Jesus' signs by others cannot serve as a norm for faith. Only Jesus' own knowledge can constitute such a norm. Jesus does not leave the significance of his signs as they relate to his identity up to human evaluation. He causes others to believe but does not relinquish the control of his revelatory message to others. He remains the unique cause of faith. Some details regarding the characteristics of humans that prevent Jesus from entrusting himself to them emerge later in John's text, most immediately in the encounter with Nicodemus. Later, in Part Two of the gospel, John gives other clear examples of the inadequacy of the human evaluation of Jesus' signs. For example, after Jesus miraculously feeds a multitude, the group who witnesses the miracle wishes to carry him off and make him king according to their own desires (6:15). Jesus, of course, resists such a designation. In 6:26, he explicitly criticizes those who respond to this sign in terms of human needs.

We shall see over the course of this analysis that John trains his readers to understand that the revelation of Jesus' identity can never be the subject of a merely earthly evaluation of Jesus' words and deeds. Rather, the revelation of Jesus' identity from beginning to end takes place according to Jesus' own will and strictly under his own control. John emphasizes the transcendent aspect of Jesus in relation to humanity in order to depict clearly the divine source of the revelation upon which his community is founded (cf. 1:9–14). The revelation of the realities on which faith is based flows in one direction only, from God to humans. The life of faith entails a full immersion in this flow and thus a complete transformation of the believing individual (cf. 3:3). In the climactic verses of his gospel John depicts such a transformation in the conversion of Thomas, a conversion that transpires according to the plan of Jesus (cf. 17:6–25).

As several commentators have noted, 2:23–25 serves as more than

an epilogue to the events that transpired over the course of this journey to Jerusalem. They serve also to introduce John's narration of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus. Nicodemus, like the members of this group, is attracted to Jesus because of the signs he performs (3:2). Since 2:23–25 serves to introduce the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, and since the setting remains Jerusalem, it is not unreasonable to assume that John presents Nicodemus as representative of the group to whom Jesus does not trust himself.⁸⁴ With this encounter John clearly depicts the difference in perspectives between Jesus and one of his earthly auditors. Nicodemus recognizes Jesus as a teacher sent from God but does not grasp Jesus' testimony regarding the heavenly realm.

Jesus' Encounters with Nicodemus (3:1–31) and the Samaritan Woman (4:7–42)

The following two passages each contain examples of what scholars call Johannine misunderstandings.⁸⁵ I shall demonstrate that both these misunderstandings reinforce several of the themes I have thus far discussed. First, Jesus is the sole means by which the thought of the Father can be communicated to humans. Second, the source and meaning of Jesus' actions uniformly transcends the human point of view. Third, Jesus' identity becomes perceptible to humans only as a result of his own will. Finally, we will see that John indicates once more that the true revelation of Jesus' identity comes only in his eschatological hour.

The Encounter with Nicodemus

Nicodemus enters the scene as a representative of those mentioned in 2:23 who saw and believed but to whom Jesus did not entrust himself. The narrative begins with Nicodemus stating, “‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him’” (3:2). He correctly interprets Jesus' miracles as demonstrations, not of Jesus' magical skills, but of God's power. Rather than saying, “Right you are

⁸⁴ Both Schnackenburg and Brown believe that 2:23–25 serves as an introduction to the encounter with Nicodemus (Schnackenburg, *John* I, 357–360; Brown, *John* I–IX, 126–127). Haenchen disagrees (Haenchen, *John* I, 192).

⁸⁵ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 152–165.

Nicodemus,” and continuing with the conversation Nicodemus initiated, Jesus abruptly lifts the conversation onto another plane. “Unless one is born ἄνωθεν, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (3:3). The adverb ἄνωθεν can mean either “from above” or “anew.” As we read on, we shall see that the word operates most effectively within the passage as a word with a double meaning.⁸⁶ It serves as the fulcrum that makes possible the passage’s back and forth movement between the earthly perspective of Nicodemus and the transcendent view of Jesus.

The reader is already familiar with the concept of divine generation as opposed to earthly generation (1:12–13). Nicodemus, however, is not. He hears Jesus’ words in quite an earth-bound manner and replies, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (3:4). Jesus persists, “Truly, Truly, I say to you unless one is born of water and Spirit . . .” (3:5–8). He then clearly separates the actions of the Spirit from the compass of human reckoning, “The wind blows . . . but you do not know whence . . . or whither. . . . So it is with everyone born of the spirit.”⁸⁷ Nicodemus’ reply, “How can this be?” reinforces this separation.

John then brings the conversation into the redemptive framework of Jesus’ cross and resurrection. “No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (3:13–14). John again reminds the reader that salvation comes not on human terms (3:8) but is brought by Jesus and is only made effective in the realization of his eschatological hour, his death and resurrection. That is the event that makes possible salvation and understanding (2:22; cf. 8:28).

⁸⁶ Haenchen, *John* I, 200.

⁸⁷ Much of the modern criticism concerning this reference to baptism revolves around the suspicion that a redactor with churchly concerns must have added it. See Bultmann, *John*, 138–139; Haenchen, *John* I, 200–201. More recent commentators have been concerned with the verse’s function within its context. See G.R. Beasley-Murray, “John 3:3, 5: Baptism, Spirit, and the Kingdom,” *The Expository Times* 97.6 (1986): 167–170. Beasley-Murray emphasizes that here is found the plainest statement in all of the New Testament regarding the relationship of baptism and the redemptive action of God’s Son in the context of “sheer grace” (166).

Significance of the Device of Misunderstanding

Through the literary device of misunderstanding, John conveys crucial information to his reader. With his use of a misunderstood image (3:4), he again reveals the gap that exists between the perspective of Jesus and that of his earthly witnesses. John does not simply present the image of rebirth. He couches it within a specific context. John's presentation of this misunderstood image is paralleled in Jesus' encounter with the woman of Samaria. I will turn now to this passage and then analyze the structural presentations of the two together.

Jesus' Encounter with the Samaritan Woman

In Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman misunderstanding again comes to the fore of John's discussion. Jesus initiates the conversation, asking the woman, "'Give me a drink'" (4:7). She questions the propriety of his question, citing the well-known rift between Jews and Samaritans (4:9). As in the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus raises the conversation to another level. He states that if she knew to whom she was speaking she would have asked him for a drink, and he would have given her "living water" (4:10).

Jesus' statement in 4:10 injects a note of mystery into the encounter. He gives her a tantalizing riddle, telling her that if she knew his identity, she would behave much differently towards him. She would ask him for "living water." Jesus' interlocutor, however, remains on an earth-bound level of understanding. She fails to see that Jesus holds out the comprehension of his identity as a key to transforming her behavior. Rather than questioning him about his identity, she questions him about the water. She asks how can he draw this living water when he has no bucket (4:11).

As in the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus again uses a deliberately ambiguous term ὕδωρ ζῶν, "living water." Living water can be a Semitic expression for "running water" or "spring water."⁸⁸ Her reference to Jesus' need of a bucket makes clear that she understands according to this Semitic idiom.⁸⁹ Jesus, on the other hand,

⁸⁸ Bultmann, *John*, 181; Haenchen, *John I*, 220.

⁸⁹ Her reference to Jacob is again a device that displays the incongruity of perspectives. The woman appears to speak of a better water source and inadvertently compares Jesus to another significant figure in Jewish history (4:12). The reader knows that Jesus is greater than Jacob.

refers to something entirely different.⁹⁰ His response to the question of his greatness in relation to Jacob (4:12) makes pellucidly clear what the reader by now knows. Jesus refers to his role as giver of life (cf. 1:4). The woman's response makes clear her failure to comprehend Jesus' lofty meaning. "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

Jesus, again, seizes the initiative in the dialogue. His request for her to get her husband comes as an apparent *non sequitur* in this conversation about water. The reader sees that the logical progress of the conversation is not at all on Jesus' mind. Rather his concern is to demonstrate his supernatural insight into the woman and by so doing to return the conversation to the subject of his identity (4:17b–18).⁹¹ His transcendent insight into her life, as did his display of insight into Nathanael, focuses the woman's attention on who he might be. She states, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet" (4:19). She diverts the attention of the one she believes to be prophet away from what would be one concern of a prophet, her own law-breaking behavior (cf. Ex. 20:14; Jer. 3:1; 9:1), to another traditional concern of prophets, the correct way to worship. The woman asks Jesus to clarify an age-old point of contention between Jews and Samaritans.⁹² Jesus, however, refocuses the conversation. True worship is possible "now" because of his presence (4:23). His reference to the future component of this eschatological moment deals with that time when

⁹⁰ See Schnackenburg, *John I*, 427. He enumerates the Old Testament uses of water as an image of God. See Jer. 2:13; 17:13, where God is "the fountain of living waters." See also Ps. 36:8, where God's people can drink from "the river of his delights." Water imagery is also used to represent God's Wisdom (Bar. 3:12; Eccl. 15:3; 24:30). See also Haenchen, *John I*, 220. One scholar, in an attempt to draw attention to the uniqueness of Jesus' expression, notes that the most frequent uses of water in the Old Testament concern its destructive aspects. He believes that John set the image of Jesus as living water against such a negative symbol in order to emphasize Jesus' goodness with the contrast (Marc Girard, "Jésus en Samarie [Jean 4:1–42]: Analyse des structures stylistiques et du processus de symbolisation," *ET* 17 [1986]: 298).

⁹¹ Teresa Okure observes that Jesus remains attentive to the woman's needs throughout the conversation that he ultimately controls. He deliberately opens her mind to who he is. She notes "Jesus' technique of arousing the woman's curiosity . . . [and] leading her to desire to know both him and the gift he offers." See *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1–42*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 31 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1988), 96.

⁹² On the argument between the Jews and Samaritans regarding the proper place of worship, see Schnackenburg, *John I*, 434–435.

the place of worship will no longer be a concern. The reader understands that moment to be that of Jesus' resurrection when the true sanctuary is revealed (2:21–22). The woman appears to recognize that the one who stands before her is somehow connected to the fulfillment of Jewish eschatological expectations and commences a conversation about the messiah. She associates Jesus' supernatural insight into herself with her conception of the Messiah. “‘I know that the Messiah is coming. . . . When he comes he will tell us everything’” (4:25). Jesus answers her, “‘I am he, the one speaking to you’” (4:26). Leaving her water jar behind, the woman rushes to tell her fellow Samaritans, “‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he be the Messiah?’” (4:30).

The woman's hasty departure, leaving her water jar behind (4:28), indicates that the meeting profoundly affected her. Her words in 4:29 (μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός) are those of cautious assertion. In light of the woman's reference to the messiah's ability to “‘tell us everything’” (4:29) and her own experience (4:39) with Jesus, it seems reasonable to assume that she strongly suspected Jesus to be the Messiah.⁹³

Bultmann believes that the woman's expectation that the messiah “‘will tell us everything’” (4:25) demonstrates a fascination with the miraculous. He states, “‘Thus, like the ‘Jews,’ she cannot see that the δόξα of the Revealer appears in the σάρξ. For she expects the πνεῦμα to give proof of itself by miraculous and remarkable phenomena.’”⁹⁴ He sees the woman as a foil for those Samaritans who believe based on a personal experience with the “word of the Revealer”

⁹³ Μήτι is an interrogative particle used in questions that expect negative replies. Based on the context of the woman's statement, it seems improbable that Brown is correct in his assertion that μήτι in this case designates an unlikelihood. See Brown, *John I–XII*, 173. Bultmann states that μήτι in this case expects an answer in the affirmative (*John*, 193, n. 3). The fact that she leaves her jar behind seems to indicate that she has been surprised by the coming of what she had thought to be a highly improbable event. Barrett misses the point in stating that the woman leaves the jar behind so Jesus can drink from it and thus incur uncleanness. Barrett believes John includes the detail in order to demonstrate that Jesus eschews levitical regulations (*John*, 200–201).

There is some question as to whether or not John is referring to the Samaritan version of the Messiah the *ta eb*, or “restorer.” I agree with Haenchen that the reference is probably to the Jewish messiah (Haenchen, *John I*, 224). Bultmann believes the absence of the article in 4:25 indicates an alteration of a source that originally contained the Samaritan term (Bultmann, *John*, 192).

⁹⁴ Bultmann, *John*, 192.

(cf. 4:42).⁹⁵ This view, however, neglects the stress John places on Jesus' ability to see into the hearts of those he encounters. Jesus brings the Samaritan woman to a deeper understanding of his identity through his personal knowledge of her. The reader has already seen this motif in Jesus' encounter with Nathanael (1:47–50). John will again emphasize this theme in Jesus' post resurrection encounters with Mary Magdalene (20:16) and Thomas (20:27). Through these personal encounters Jesus brings his disciples to knowledge of his identity. Once again, Jesus' identity, not the behavior of his interlocutor, proves to be the focus of the passage.

Function of Literary Devices in 3:1–41 and 4:7–42

Two recent commentators see in both Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus and his conversation with the Samaritan woman examples of John's use of irony.⁹⁶ R. Alan Culpepper (*Anatomy*) and Gail O'Day (*Revelation in the Fourth gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim*) have their own distinct views on how these ironies⁹⁷ function theologically.

Culpepper

Culpepper notes that John builds ironies out of the misunderstandings that arise between Jesus and his interlocutors. He states of these misunderstandings, "their most obvious function is to enforce a marked distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders,' between those who understand Jesus and those who do not."⁹⁸ John's readers are led "to feel a judgmental distance between themselves as 'insiders' who understand the elusive implication of Jesus' revelatory discourses and those who have rejected Jesus."⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Ibid., 201.

⁹⁶ Indeed all of the passages I have thus far examined have been counted among those containing ironies (Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 169–180). Culpepper counts the following among the examples of John's use of misunderstanding as a literary device: 2:19–21; 3:3–5; 4:10–15 (*Anatomy*, 161–162).

⁹⁷ O'Day's study is concerned solely with irony and, in particular, its function in the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (*Revelation in the Fourth gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986]).

⁹⁸ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 164.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

According to Culpepper, John makes frequent use of literary devices, both of misunderstanding and of irony. His readers, as they are exposed again and again to these literary devices, become "oriented to the level on which the gospel's language is to be understood and are warned that failure identifies them with the characterization of the Jews and others who cannot interpret the gospel's language correctly."¹⁰⁰ These devices identify fundamental choices that the reader must make: to identify either with the "insiders," those who share the author's view of the truth, or with the "outsiders," those characters who fail to understand Jesus. The characters in the gospel serve either as inadequate or adequate exemplars of faith whose behaviors the reader is encouraged either to mimic or to eschew.

Culpepper theorizes that John intends his text to work on his readers' emotions. He describes the text in terms of the psychological responses it evokes from them. He paints a picture of John's reader, sitting side by side with the author in his "Olympian" perch, "smugly enjoy[ing]" the view as the characters in the gospel fail to comprehend what he or she already knows.¹⁰¹ The author with "a wink or a smile creates a bond of communication" as a variety of ironical types are "adduced for the readers enjoyment."¹⁰² All of this pleasurable bonding which "sweetens and spices the fellowship between reader and narrator" ultimately "drives a wedge between the reader and the values and appearances of the unbelieving world" ("especially the Jews") as "a relationship which is shared only by those who are committed at the deepest levels to the same life-transforming beliefs" is solidified.¹⁰³

Culpepper's view oversimplifies John's presentation, especially in regard to John's preparation of his readership. It is his view that the characters in the gospel serve as exemplars of how one should or should not understand Jesus. Characters of certain types misunderstand in particular ways concomitant with their characterization.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 165.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 32, 176.

¹⁰² Ibid., 175, 179.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 180.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 162–163. Of John's use of misunderstanding, Culpepper states, "Although the selection of [Jesus'] interlocutors may seem to be arbitrary, the correlation of the themes of the various misunderstandings with the gospel's characterizations shows that the misunderstandings sharpen the characterizations and enhance the representative value of each of these characters" (*Anatomy*, 163). Culpepper fails to

Those who do not understand “serve . . . as representatives of the consequences of failure to do so.”¹⁰⁵

Culpepper himself states, however, that there is not a character in the gospel, even from among the disciples, who adequately understands Jesus’ identity, “except perhaps the beloved disciple who never misunderstands.”¹⁰⁶ Here is a flaw in the picture he paints of the gospel; for John’s readers are never told what the so-called consequences of failure are. Indeed, the reader never learns the ultimate fates of such characters as Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. The gospel never spells out the consequences of their failures for it never makes it clear that they fail.

This book has thus far attempted to demonstrate that John, from the beginning of his gospel, trains his readers to see that Jesus’ identity and his actions are only fully understood in light of his eschatological hour. Culpepper lists eighteen instances of misunderstandings.¹⁰⁷ Of the eighteen, he notes that eleven have “themes” related to Jesus’ death, resurrection or glorification.¹⁰⁸ However, in only one of the misunderstandings that he discusses does he stress that the proper understanding of Jesus’ words is “dependent on the post-Easter perspective.”¹⁰⁹ In his analysis of the misunderstanding with Nicodemus he fails to note Jesus’ reference to the necessity of his hour of glorification as the key to gaining eternal life in the kingdom (3:3, 14). The discourse, according to Culpepper, revolves more around Nicodemus’ failure than around Jesus as the life-giving key to success. The point for Culpepper is that the reader learns to avoid Nicodemus-like behavior.

address the fact that most of the characters he lists appear no more than once in the narrative. The reader rarely needs to guess in advance the responses of a well-established character. Rarely can the reader be imagined as saying such things as, “Oh, there goes that Nathanael again worrying about someone’s social background;” or, “Once again, that Samaritan woman takes things too literally.” Instead, the evangelist seems to present scenes of misunderstanding with regard to general conditions of humanity rather than with regard to carefully planned characterizations.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 165.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 160.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 161–162. They are: 2:19–21; 3:3–5; 4:10–15; 4:31–34; 6:32–35; 6:51–53; 7:33–36; 8:21–22; 8:31–35; 8:51–53; 8:56–58; 11:11–15; 11:23–25; 12:32–34; 13:36–38; 14:4–6; 14:7–9; 16:16–19.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. However, each of the seven to which he does not attribute this theme takes place in the context of a discussion in which the eschatological point of view clarifies the issue.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 155.

Culpepper fails to understand that John can only fully clarify the misunderstandings from the perspective of Jesus' eschatological glorification (cf. 1:50–51; 2:22; 3:14; 5:25–26; 7:39; 8:28; 11:25; 12:23–26, 32; 20:22, 28).¹¹⁰ He does this because he consistently fails to see Jesus and his actions as the focus of the gospel. Rather he focuses on the behavior of those who encounter Jesus.

The overall function of the gospel, Culpepper seems to be saying, is not to make clear Jesus' identity so that readers might come to faith in him (20:31) but to convince the reader to identify with the right side. John, according to Culpepper, coerces his readers to join the Christian in-crowd.

O'Day

Gail O'Day, too, is interested in John's presentation of irony. She deals specifically with the irony she sees in Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman. Her approach to the function of Johannine irony is quite different from Culpepper's. O'Day does not see irony, as it has traditionally been seen, as a situation in which the reader possesses some crucial information that one of the characters lacks and thus can laugh at or pity the mistakes that character makes for want of this information. Rather, she sees irony in terms of the supposed feelings of ambiguity it produces in the reader. She states:

The double exposure of irony simultaneously places two contradictory images or expressions before the reader without resolving the tensions between them, and the reader is left to decipher the relationship between expression and meaning on his or her own.¹¹¹

According to O'Day, the author of the gospel presents the Samaritan woman's inability to comprehend Jesus (4:10–15) as a device that causes the reader to experience personally the woman's confusion. Regarding Jesus' statements in 4:10 and 14, O'Day states, his "indirect responses leave room for the woman's personal movement. . . . If she wants to understand him, she *must* make this movement [towards Jesus]."¹¹² The reader too must join the woman in her dilemma and

¹¹⁰ See Haenchen, *John* I, 250–251; M. de Jonge, "Signs," 117.

¹¹¹ Gail O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 95.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 91.

face the same decision. O'Day states, "Irony allows the reader room for personal choice but at the same time anticipates and expects that the choice and decision will be made."¹¹³

According to O'Day, the correct understanding of irony requires that the reader make the correct decisions. The reader must not go away resolved that Jesus was indeed referring to "spring water." The prologue and the sections leading up to this narrative prepare the reader to make the correct decisions.¹¹⁴ For O'Day the presence of a question in the Samaritan woman's mind signals the presence of a gap in the narrative. The question opens a space in the narrative that the reader must enter and seek to close.¹¹⁵

O'Day sees the supposed gap created by the irony in this narrative as a region of uncertainty that John creates in his reader's mind, the identical region of uncertainty that Jesus' words opened in the Samaritan woman. Irony, she believes, recreates the revelatory experience for the gospel's readers.¹¹⁶ They experience the same questions, the same ambiguity, and the same emotional distress that the Samaritan woman faced. As the encounter with Jesus forced the Samaritan woman to face these problems, so too does the encounter with the text force the reader to face the same problems.

O'Day states: "Rather than looking for the locus of revelation behind or in front of the literary text, the operation of irony as revelatory language suggests that the locus of revelation lies *in* the text itself."¹¹⁷ In closing the gap, in deciding whether Jesus is a bogus source of spring water or the true source of life eternal, the reader makes a decision regarding the identity of the one encountered in the text.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Gary Phillips, who largely adopts O'Day's assessment of irony, states, "Irony opens up more than one response or reading. In classical terms, it is a trope of non-closure rather than of closure, always pointing to the difference between what the text says and what it means. . . . Irony therefore calls closure of every sort into question" ("The Ethics of Reading Deconstructively, or Speaking Face-to-Face: The Samaritan Woman Meets Derrida at the Well," in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Series, eds. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight, no. 109 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 300.

¹¹⁶ O'Day, *Revelation*, 46–48.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 31–32.

One weakness of this approach lies in its assessment of what irony is. Irony, as a literary device, should not be confused with the deliberate use of ambiguity as a literary device. The reader is never meant to suffer the confusion experienced by the Samaritan woman. The reader, having been informed by the prologue and the ensuing narratives up to this point, knows from the outset that the Samaritan woman misses the mark.¹¹⁸

A second weakness is her suggestion that “narrative mode and theological claim” are inseparable. According to O’Day the medium is the message in an absolute sense. She states: “As a result of John’s use of irony to communicate the dynamics of revelation, the narrative does not mediate the revelation but *is* the revelation.”¹¹⁹ This assessment of the text’s relation to its subject matter treats the text as a purely poetical endeavor and neglects its mimetic aspect. As far as I can see, John seeks to *describe* Christ’s revelatory encounter with humanity, not to create it. There is a distinction between the revelatory act of Christ and what the gospel reveals. The gospel points to the Johannine community’s experience of Christ’s act but is not itself that experience. That this is the point of view of the text is made clear in 21:1. “After this Jesus manifested himself (ἐφανερώσεν ἑαυτὸν) again to his disciples. . . .” It is the action of Christ, his making himself visible, about which the gospel claims to speak.

Conclusions Regarding 3:1–41 and 4:7–42

John’s systematic presentation of misunderstandings does indeed operate according to a literary plan. This plan, however, does not appear to revolve around the characters who surround Jesus as Culpepper and O’Day suggest it might. Again, it seems best to try and understand this plan in relation to the gospel’s stated purpose (20:31). I will consider how these misunderstandings function in a text that intends to move its readers to believe that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of God.”

Thus far I have attempted to demonstrate that the gospel’s presentation of the inability of those who encounter Jesus to understand

¹¹⁸ Irony functions more in the manner described by Culpepper. The reader is an informed insider, set apart from the victim of the irony. Irony is most commonly used to elicit humor or pathos, not questions regarding the text’s meaning.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

him serves more to reveal Jesus' transcendence than to reveal character defects in his interlocutors that the reader is to avoid.¹²⁰ This, too, is the case for the narratives of both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. In both instances Jesus confounds his hearer with symbolic language. For Nicodemus it is the concept of being born anew (or from above) (ἄνωθεν). For the Samaritan woman it is the concept of living water (ὕδωρ ζῶν). In both instances Jesus' interlocutors interpret the images literally. In both cases too, the author portrays their literal-mindedness to an extreme and almost implausible degree. Nonetheless, in both cases the reader knows the correct interpretation. If the reader knows the truth, what purpose is served by John's narration of the incomprehension of these two?¹²¹ The answer lies

¹²⁰ For a different interpretation of the Samaritan woman episode, but one that still focuses on the role of the woman in the story rather than on the identity of Jesus, see Hendrikus Boers' work *Neither on this Mountain Nor in Jerusalem: A Study of John 4*, The Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, no. 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). Boers performs a strictly semiotic/structuralist exegesis, the goal of which is to discover the objective meaning contained, not in the reader's or the author's mind, but in the abstract structure underlying the text itself. He states that he is striving to "arrive at the highest degree of abstractness by breaking the text up into its most general constituents in terms of universal principles and the structural relationships between them" (1). He analyses the story of the Samaritan woman as a single, self-contained structural unit and thus does not search beyond the parameters of Chapter Four for the story's meaning. Within that unit, he detects structural pairings such as value/sustenance and value/obedience. As the story progresses, the sustenance values (water and food) are replaced with the religious value of "obedience" (121–132, 139, 192). Obedience ultimately entails entering into Jesus' work and spreading the message that "true worship of the Father is in the spirit, not in identifiable religious claims, 'neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem'" (199).

Boers severely restricts the possible meanings of the episode when he isolates the parameters of his investigation to 4:1–42 without regard for its interconnection with the remainder of the gospel. Regarding the episode, he states, "The fact that Jesus comments on the story demands that we look for *all* [emphasis mine] the elements of his clarification in the story itself" (190). As for Jesus' comment in v. 37, "one sows and another reaps," Boers states, "The sower and the reaper should be found in the story itself, which alone already makes it almost obvious that the woman must be the sower who prepared the villagers for the harvest which Jesus was about to reap as the completion of his Father's work" (190).

¹²¹ We have already seen the answers of Culpepper and O'Day. See above. Historical critics too have addressed the question. Some have tried to read the narrative as symbolic of Jesus' destruction of the Jewish cult and of the Christian community that arises in its place. Schnackenburg, who himself rejects this view, lists Barrett, Haenchen and Lightfoot as its proponents (*John* I, 355–357). Schnackenburg, however, believes that it functions to allow the reader to see "the secret forces at work in unbelief, to see the gulf between Jesus and official Judaism and to sense the coming catastrophe from the very start. It also allows the reader to share at once the perspective of faith" (*John* I, 355).

in John's method of presentation. John goes out of his way to present in exaggerated fashion the gulf that divides Jesus' point of view from that of his earthly auditors.

In the story of Nicodemus, John juxtaposes the higher meaning of Jesus' words with the oddly unimaginative understanding of Nicodemus. The extreme nature of Nicodemus' literal interpretation cannot be lost on the reader. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (3:4). These words seem strange for a teacher of Israel who, being familiar the common practice of baptism in Palestinian Judaism, should have seen in them their common symbolic nature. Baptism was routine for Jewish proselytes. During the day of Jesus, the rite of initiation included circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice. The rabbis have referred to this act of ritual cleansing as being "born anew." The proselyte was said to have become as a "newborn child" (*Nebhamoth* 48 b.).¹²² Jesus' comment in verse 12, "If I have told you earthly things . . ." emphasizes for the reader the inordinately literal-minded nature of Nicodemus' response.

The tight-fisted grip that Nicodemus exerts upon mundane reality serves to emphasize the heavenly reality of which Jesus speaks. The clash between the mundane and the supra-mundane creates for the reader a meaning that could not be conveyed by the "born anew/from above" in isolation.¹²³ By tethering Jesus' words to their ordinary meanings in the interpretation of Nicodemus, John enables their new super-natural load to be drawn out. "Born again/from above" (γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν) juts out against the earthly world-view in radical strangeness. The elimination of the metaphor (socio-moral rebirth in the rabbinic sense) seems deliberate. What remains is a discussion about two distinct realities, or modes of being.

By excluding a metaphorical presentation of the "life" Jesus discusses, John enables the reader to see that Jesus is speaking about

¹²² See J.K. Howard, *New Testament Baptism* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1970), 17.

¹²³ This reliance upon grammar is similar to what Roman Jakobson observes in certain instances of Russian poetry. In these, grammatical strangeness is a more powerfully evocative tool than mere verbal images. Of these poems he states "the figure of grammar . . . dominates and . . . supplants the tropes." The function of grammar in poetry he likens to that of "geometry in painting" (Roman Jakobson, "Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry" in *Roman Jakobson: Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, eds. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985], 43-45).

another “actual” level of reality—the level of the Spirit, as opposed to that of the flesh. With Nicodemus’ literal-mindedness, John confines the possible understandings of this rebirth within the realm of “real” birth. According to John, the rebirth of which Jesus speaks is just as real as the physical rebirth of which Nicodemus speaks. John, here, emphasizes the “otherness” of the divine reality to which Jesus alone has access (3:13). Because this rebirth is beyond human reckoning, human access to this new “eternal life” cannot come through any human effort. It comes only as a result of the eschatological act of Jesus, his being lifted up (3:14).

John presents Jesus in a relational manner, exposing his transcendent nature against the backdrop of the merely human. In this relationship, human dependence upon him as the provider of “life” becomes evident. Similarly, in the encounter with the Samaritan woman, John makes no attempt to reconcile or mesh the earthly and heavenly viewpoints of Jesus and the woman. Rather they are placed side by side in “blunt” contrast.¹²⁴ It is in the contrast between water used for bodily sustenance and the “living water” of which Jesus speaks (4:10–15) that the unique, other-worldly properties of living water (ὕδωρ ζῶν) are drawn out. According to John’s narrative, this life-giving water cannot be understood in isolation according to merely earthly standards. The human point of view must be transcended by the actions of Jesus seen in association with his eschatological hour (4:21; cf. 2:22; 3:14).¹²⁵

Again, John seeks to reveal Jesus’ identity through his interactions with others. The grammatical contexts of these two exaggerated misunderstandings perform two functions. First, they provide backdrops against which Jesus’ transcendence is revealed. Second, they emphasize the chasm that exists between Jesus’ perspective and an earthly one. Human understanding is facilitated only by Jesus’ action.

¹²⁴ Marc Girarde, “Jésus en Samarie (Jean 4:1–42): Analyse des structures stylistiques et du processus de symbolisation,” *Eglise et Théologie*, 17 (1986): 298. Girarde notes that the “blunt” juxtaposition of the two passages highlights the meaning of Jesus’ words. Girarde concentrates, however, on the difference in the quality of the two types of water. Well water is encased, “imprisoned”; the water Jesus offers is unbound, free and eternal.

¹²⁵ Jesus’ conversation with his disciples in this chapter follows the same pattern. They confuse earthly food with Jesus’ food: the fulfillment of his eschatological purpose (4:31–35). Additionally, the reader learns that the misunderstandings are not limited to any one group.

Jesus Enables his Disciples' Success

Another programmatic theme develops out of John's narration of the encounter with the Samaritan woman. This theme is the disciple's reliance upon Jesus for their success as missionaries. At the end of the episode, the Samaritan woman, so impressed with Jesus' insight into her that she now strongly suspects that Jesus is the Christ (4:28–29), spreads the news of the encounter to her fellow Samaritans. The reader is told, "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me all that I ever did'" (4:39). Because of her testimony, the Samaritans implore Jesus to stay. He does. The reader then learns that the Samaritans no longer believe because of the woman's words but have heard for themselves and know indeed that Jesus is the "Savior of the world" (4:42). At least one commentator has postulated that the Samaritan woman impressed her fellows with talk of Jesus' miracles, and that Jesus corrected their flawed faith with his "word."¹²⁶ It is difficult, however, to determine what the point of this episode is until one considers the short scene directly preceding it.

Verses 31–38 begin with a misunderstanding over Jesus' statement regarding the food he has to eat. Quickly, however, the reader learns that the food of which Jesus speaks is his bringing to completion his Father's work in the eschatological harvest. He states, "'My food is that I do the will of him who sent me and bring to completion his work'" (4:34).¹²⁷ Jesus will finally accomplish what the Father began in sending him. The reader here recognizes that the sending of Jesus

¹²⁶ This passage has elicited many and various theories regarding its meaning. Haenchen sees in the passage a distinction between faith based on signs and faith based on the word. He states that "the woman has certainly told the Samaritans of Jesus only as an all knowing miracle worker. When they had Jesus with them they modified their faith in hearing his words. . . . Faith is genuine when the auditor perceives the Lord speaking in the words of proclamation" (*John* I, 226). Schnackenburg does not see a problem in the content of the woman's preaching as Haenchen did. Rather he sees a problem in the fact that the woman had "no authority or mandate to preach" (*John* I, 457). Still the point for Schnackenburg is that the Samaritans are seen as "exemplary models of faith, since they do not need signs and wonders (contrast v. 48) but believe at once in response to Jesus' 'word'" (*John* I, 456).

¹²⁷ Both verbs in this verse are governed by the same ἵνα (ἵνα ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντος με καὶ τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον). Thus, each represents a component of the same intended revelatory act. Jesus does what the Father wants, and what Jesus does completes what the Father began by sending him.

by the Father is the basis for the missionary success of the disciples. In John's concluding verse of this scene in Samaria the reader can understand the Samaritans' recognition of Jesus as "the savior of the world" (4:42) according to this missionary theme. The reader, upon reaching Thomas' confession, will understand Thomas' words in light of what Jesus tells his disciples both here and in 20:21. Jesus is to be recognized as the one who brings to completion his Father's saving will (cf. 5:19–21; 17:20–21).

Indeed, Jesus states the time for the harvest has arrived (4:35) and those who reap will gather the fruit of eternal life (4:36). He emphasizes, however, that those whom he sends to reap are gathering the fruit of another's labor. The missionary success of the disciples is grounded in the work of Jesus. They are completely reliant upon the actions of Jesus as the one sent by the Father to carry out his eschatological labor.¹²⁸ This theme of the disciple's total reliance upon Jesus as the vehicle for their success will appear twice more in the gospel proper, once in each of the gospel's remaining parts (6:16–21 and 15:1–8).¹²⁹

Recognition of this motif aids the reader in the interpretation of 4:39–42. Here one finds a clear demonstration, not that faith is better based on "the word" than on "signs," but that faith relies in a primary sense upon a personal encounter with Jesus himself.¹³⁰ The woman testifies to her fellow Samaritans of her meeting with Jesus. Although she is somewhat tentative in her description, she correctly identifies Jesus as "the messiah" (4:29). After meeting Jesus himself, the Samaritans tell the woman that they no longer believe because of her word but have heard for themselves (4:42a). Here John does not present a negation of the woman's testimony. Their testimony

¹²⁸ Charles Giblin, "The Miraculous Crossing of the Sea (John 6:16–21)," *NTS* 29 (1983): 100–101.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* The theme also appears a final time in the gospel's epilogue where Jesus makes possible the disciple's miraculous catch (Ch. 21).

¹³⁰ Bultmann demonstrates that the connection of 4:39–42 with 4:31–38 is meant to reveal "that Jesus himself is active in the work of his messengers." "The believer may not base his faith on the authority of others, but must himself find the object of faith; he must perceive, through the proclaimed word, the word of the revealer himself" (*John*, 201). The preaching of the word and the actions of Jesus in history are effective only in as much as they are connected to Jesus' eschatological presence (*John*, 198–201). On this point I concur with Bultmann. I diverge with him, however, when he stresses the perceptive ability of the word's interpreter over the enabling action of Jesus.

regarding Jesus' identity presupposes that which the women said and then transcends it. They identify Jesus as "the savior of the world" (4:42b). Indeed, theirs transcends any testimony given thus far in the narrative (outside of the introductory testimony of the Baptist [1:34]).

John here reinforces the pattern he first presented in the call of Nathanael. Personal contact with Jesus deepens the insight into his identity. The reader also sees a characteristic of the manner in which John uses language to describe Jesus that will culminate in the appearance to Thomas. The language used by one character in the narrative to testify to Jesus' identity is surpassed by the language John puts on the lips of a character who then has personal contact with Jesus. In the testimonies of both Mary Magdalene (20:18) and the disciples to Thomas (20:25), Jesus is described as "the Lord." After his personal contact with the risen Jesus, Thomas' language transcends that which he heard in the testimony of others (20:28).

The Healing of the Royal Official's Son

The final passage I shall address in this chapter forms the conclusion of the gospel's first part. It is the healing of the royal official's son (4:46–54). In Chapter Two of this book, I have already outlined in some detail the role this passage plays in the contemporary critique of sign-based faith. For John, however, the content of one's faith, not the vehicle for its establishment, determines the soundness of that faith. What we shall see criticized by the evangelist in this passage is not the sign but the "demand" that the Lord act according to human expectations and human needs.

This passage (4:43–54) is the second example of the pattern Giblin has described as "suggestion, negative response, and positive action."¹³¹ The first was the wedding at Cana. The action in this instance too transpires in Cana. The encounter begins when the official begs Jesus to "come down" (καταβαίνειν) and heal his son (4:47b). Jesus does not respond to the man directly, but rather addresses his negative reply, using second person plural verbs (ἴδητε . . . πιστεύσητε) to all present, "unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe" (4:48).

John makes it clear that Jesus' auditors expect some sort of visible miracle. But Jesus changes the focus of the conversation from

¹³¹ Giblin, "Suggestion," 197–198, 204.

the healing he has been asked to perform to the “faith” of his auditors (4:48b).¹³² After Jesus’ negative response, the man persists, repeating his request that Jesus come down, “‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’” The man’s language makes it clear that he considers it necessary for Jesus to “come down” (aor. inv. followed by *πρίν* w. inf.) in order to save the boy’s life.¹³³ Jesus, however, does not attend to this requirement. He does not go down as the man twice requested! He simply states, “Go, your son lives” (4:50).

There is no indication that Jesus changed his mind in response to the man’s earnest supplication.¹³⁴ Rather, the reader learns that Jesus’ concern for faith (4:48) has been addressed, “The man believed the word Jesus spoke and went on his way” (4:50). The man’s entire family comes to believe as they learn that it was at the “hour” in which Jesus spoke that the boy was healed.¹³⁵ As in the wine miracle, the reader learns that Jesus acts not according to human concerns but according to his own saving purpose.

Clearly, Jesus’ words in 4:48 are critical of those to whom he directs them. One must take note, however, that he is critical only of their state before they come to believe. Of those who come to faith, John presents no critique. The statement that the man’s entire household comes to belief (4:53) forms the positive conclusion of this narrative. Here again, the faith of one person can be and is the basis for that of others. The man’s whole household came to believe. Their faith however is based on the experience of the royal official, an experience facilitated by Jesus and carried out on his own terms. As noted earlier, Jesus’ signs are only efficacious when they are understood according to the words and intentions of Jesus. Those who attempt to understand Jesus’ signs (cf. 6:14–15, 26) or his words (8:31–33) according to their own needs do not see the truth to which they point. They do not see that vision of faith that John wishes to share with his readers (cf. 1:14; 20:31).

¹³² Loren L. Johns and Douglas B. Miller, “The Signs as Witnesses in the Fourth gospel: Reexamining the Evidence,” *CBQ* 56 (1994): 530.

¹³³ Giblin, “Suggestion,” 204.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 205.

¹³⁵ Giblin points out the significance of the language of “descent.” Jesus does not “come down” to perform miracles. Rather he “comes down” to fulfill his eschatological purpose as the Son of Man, “the sole revealer of heavenly mysteries” (cf. 3:13) (“Suggestion, 205). In this regard, the concern for the “hour” at which the miracle took place might also have an eschatological significance.

Conclusion

With the gospel's prologue and the first of its three parts, John begins to condition his readers to receive, according to his literary plan, that which is to follow in the remainder of the gospel. The prologue prepares its readers to see Jesus revealed in terms of his relations to others. This mode of presentation is continued in each of the episodes treated above. John also sharply divides Jesus' heavenly point of view from the temporal perspective of his hearers who consistently misunderstand him. Furthermore, John has led his readers to understand that it is only by divinely initiated action that this divide is bridged. The success of Jesus' disciples relies upon the action of Jesus.

By presenting Jesus in terms of his relations to others, John energizes the images he uses to describe Jesus' transcendence (both in regard to his knowledge and action) with the tension that exists between the mundane and divine perspectives. Each time the gospel is read, these images are regenerated within a literary structure mimetic of Christ's transcendent relationship with humanity. John's language thus never degenerates into commonplace formulations.

The reader has seen John emphasize Jesus' omniscience with regard to the thoughts of humans. Additionally, the reader has begun to see that Jesus acts according to his own agenda. This is most clearly revealed in the pattern of suggestion (2:3 and 4:47), negative response (2:4 and 4:48), and positive action (2:7 and 4:50).

John will reinforce each of these themes in parts two and three of the gospel. By the time the reader reaches Chapter 20, he or she will be instilled with the principle that faith, whether it results from the acceptance of testimony or the seeing of signs, comes to humans as the result of divine action in accordance with the divine will. The separation of the disciples' testimony (20:25) and Jesus' action (20:27) in the Thomas story makes this explicit.

CHAPTER FIVE

DIVIDER OF PERSPECTIVES (JESUS PERCEIVED IN RELATION TO OPPOSITION)

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the second of the gospel's three narrative parts, 5:1–10:42.¹ This second part differs most significantly from the first in that it is characterized by the controversy which arises over Jesus' actions and identity, a controversy that spreads even among his disciples (6:66). This crisis over Jesus' identity reaches such a pitch that it more than once manifests itself in open hostility (5:18; 8:59; 10:31).²

In the second section of the gospel, the evangelist further details several of the important themes to which he introduced his readers in Part One. Primary among these themes are: Jesus' transcendent insight into the thoughts of those who do not understand him (1:47–48; 2:23–25; 4:18, 39), Jesus' role as the facilitator of his disciples' success (4:31–38), the independent and self-determined nature of Jesus' actions (2:1–12; 4:43–54), and the idea that Jesus' identity as God's son can be fully understood only from the perspective of his eschatological glory (1:51; 2:4, 22; 3:14; 4:21–23).

John presents each of these themes by limning Jesus against the backdrop of other characters in the gospel. In each case, Jesus appears as one who transcends the natural perceptive and cognitive abilities of his hearers. Thus, in each case, John presents Jesus in a relational manner in terms of his nature as it transcends ordinary, human perception. In this chapter, I shall demonstrate that John reinforces and expounds upon each of the above themes as he prepares his readers to understand the gospel's final part, and Thomas' climactic confession of faith (20:28).

¹ Giblin, "Tripartite," 454–455.

² Ibid. See also R. Alan Culpepper, "John 5:1–18, A Sample of Narrative Critical Commentary," in *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspectives*, ed. Mark W.G. Stibbe (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 196–197.

John's Narrative Style and the Gospel's Purpose

We have thus far seen John place before his readers themes that clearly portray Jesus' transcendence. Our author has also told his readers of a new, everlasting life in which he or she might participate (4:14) and has positively prescribed for them means by which they might join in this new "life." These are rebirth (3:3–7, cf. 1:13) and belief (3:18–21, 36, cf. 1:12). The two, of course, cannot be divided. Faith engenders life (3:15). That the reader comes to find this life-giving faith is the stated purpose of the gospel (20:31).

At this point, however, we encounter a difficulty. John has identified Jesus as the Son of God and has told his readers that if they believe this they shall receive life everlasting. Thus, he has transmitted to his readers the information he considers necessary for salvation. He has expressly told them that Jesus is God's only son (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). Here we face a dilemma. Cannot one who has been given the information John gives his readers in the prologue simply announce, "I believe Jesus is the Christ the Son of God," and then close the book and have done with it? At first glance, it appears that the reader need not read any further than 1:18 to garner the information needed for salvation.

We must therefore determine how the remainder of the gospel serves John's purpose. More to the point at hand, we must determine how it will further our understanding of the role of doubting Thomas. In order to clarify this problem, let us turn to the pre-eminent proponent of a synchronic reading of John's gospel and his assessment of its "plot." Culpepper states that, in those parts of the gospel following the prologue, the reader will repeatedly be drawn into experiences of dramatic tension. By creating these tensions John hopes to exhort his reader to maintain the hold on the truth he or she acquired at the outset of the narrative. Culpepper explains:

Plot development in John . . . is a matter of how Jesus' identity comes to be recognized and how it fails to be recognized. . . . Each episode has essentially the same plot. Will [each character] recognize Jesus and thereby receive eternal life? The story is repeated over and over. No one can miss it. . . . The prologue gives each of these episodes an ironic background in that the reader has already been taken into the confidence of the narrator and *knows who Jesus is* [emphasis mine]. We are made to feel superior to the characters Jesus confronts. . . . For us to question this understanding would mean that we would have to give up

our privileged position and be no more perceptive than the characters we are able to look down upon. This literary dynamic pushes the reader to embrace the ideological point of view of the author. . . .³

According to Culpepper, the information one gains in reading beyond the prologue serves to reinforce an already accomplished goal. Unlike the characters in the gospel, the reader has been “taken in to the confidence of the narrator” and *already* “*knows* who Jesus is.” With regard to his stated purpose, “These are written so that you may believe . . .”⁴ (20:31), one might now conclude that the majority of what John records is superfluous. Although, the possibility that someone might come to such a conclusion seems unlikely, it remains a

³ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 89. Culpepper states that, since each episode has essentially the same plot, it is only “the challenging profusion of metaphorical imagery [that] serves to maintain [the reader’s] interest and prevent the repetitions from becoming monotonous” (*Anatomy*, 89).

⁴ This verse has a variant reading. The verb “to believe” (πιστεύειν) appears in both the aorist subjunctive, πιστεύσῃτε (come to believe), and in the present subjunctive, πιστεύητε (continue to believe). This variant gives rise to the significant question of whether this verse is addressed to believers or non-believers. Both readings have significant support in the early textual witnesses. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 219–220. Metzger finds the textual evidence inconclusive and cannot opt for one reading over the other. He brackets the sigma (πιστεύ[σ]ῃτε) providing for both readings. An identical situation is found in 19:35. There, however, the majority of the witnesses attest to the aorist subjunctive (Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 937). Here too, however, Metzger finds the evidence inconclusive and does not choose one reading over the other (*A Textual Commentary*, 218). Brown argues that, since the present subjunctive is the better attested in 19:35, it is probably the correct reading in 20:31 (*John XIII–XXI*, 1056).

In his recent article (“On the Text and Meaning of John 20:30–31,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck Vol. III*, eds. F. Van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett, G. Van Belle, J. Verheyden [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992], 2193–2206), Gordon D. Fee argues that the manuscript evidence *is* conclusive, stating that the “only notable early support is for the present subjunctive” (“On the Text of 20:30–31,” 2195). He believes that John makes precise use of *Aktionsart*. By using the present subjunctive, the evangelist accents the intended durative nature of faith that must be lived out day to day. The aorist would have suggested a permanent, once-and-for-all change of condition. Such a usage of the present subjunctive of πιστεύειν is evident in 6:29–30 (“On the Text of 20:30–31,” 2197–2205).

The Blass-Debrunner-Funk grammar states: “In general precepts (also to an individual) concerning attitudes and conduct there is a preference for the present” (F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk, [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961], no., 335). Thus, John’s use of the present subjunctive would not necessarily denote an audience that already believed. The language of the prologue (“we beheld his glory” [1:14]), however, suggests that John addresses a Christian community. Thus, the present subjunctive reading better matches the tenor of the gospel.

possibility, however, until one admits two things: First, John's stated purpose (20:31), the concluding sentence of the gospel proper, is addressed to at least a portion of his audience that does not genuinely (or firmly, or finally) believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.⁵ And second, the author does not believe that a mere statement of fact regarding the identity of Jesus would suffice to lead readers towards the goal of belief, but rather, he believes that the entire gospel is necessary.

In Culpepper's analysis, John uses the body of the gospel that follows the prologue to reinforce the point of view that he clearly established in the mind of the reader at the outset of his work. He accomplishes this by appealing to the sense of self-esteem of each reader. They "embrace the [author's] ideological point of view" because, if this point of view is true, it allows them to feel that they are privileged insiders, that they are "superior" to those characters in the gospel who fail to perceive correctly the truth about Jesus.⁶ In order to maintain this good feeling, the reader must hold the gospel's message to be true. Culpepper's view, however, neglects the complex relational theology the author constructs over the course of his narrative. The prologue tells the reader who Jesus is. The remainder of the text trains the reader's eye to see where he is found.

*The Relationship between Jesus and Humanity from
Several Vantage Points*

In contrast to Culpepper, this study does not assume that all of John's readers gain a firm understanding of the truth of Jesus as Savior simply in hearing it declared as fact in the gospel's first chapter. Rather, from the prologue to the end of his gospel, John continues to disclose to his readers how they might come to know the not as yet fully disclosed object of faith. John's gospel is an attested theophany. It focuses on the one whose glory "we" (the believers) have seen (1:14) and presents him in terms of his "dwelling among us" (ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). John explains the truth concerning Jesus in

⁵ This statement is not meant to contest the scholarly consensus that the gospel was originally written for use in John's Christian community and was not primarily intended for use as a missionary document. See Brown, *John I-XI*, lxxviii.

⁶ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 89.

terms of this experience. A brief statement relating the knowledge gained in a flash of insight would not be adequate. According to John, Jesus is known through his continuing encounter with humanity. Below, I propose to demonstrate that John presents Jesus by exposing him against the backdrop of his anthropological outlook. But before I do, let us first examine the work of another expositor, Jeffrey L. Staley.⁷

Staley asserts, as does this book, that John, beyond the prologue, continues to reveal *new* information relevant to faith. The method of Staley's analysis, however, moves much closer to Culpepper's than my own. As repeatedly noted above, Culpepper focuses his analysis on the characters in the gospel rather than focusing his analysis on how the gospel reveals the identity of Jesus, the said object of faith (cf. 20:31).

The point of Culpepper's analysis is to demonstrate the relationship between the reader and an intratextual construct: the set of characters in the gospel narrative. Culpepper studiously avoids indicating that the narrative might describe for its readers an object that exists outside the text.⁸

Staley, too, examines only the gospel's intratextual characteristics. He is concerned with the text's "implied reader" and specifically names both the gospel's "implied author" and "implied reader" as "intratextual" constructs.⁹ As we shall see, his conclusions, as do Culpepper's, revolve around the quality of "faith" rather than a description of the object in whom the gospel asks that that faith be placed.

Staley

In his dissertation, "The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel," Staley states that with the prologue John leads his readers to a "very high level of faith in a very short period of time."¹⁰ He goes on to say, however, that as one moves further into the text, one will realize that this "high posi-

⁷ Jeffrey Lloyd Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1988).

⁸ See *Anatomy*, 3–5.

⁹ Staley, *The Print*, 33–37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

tion accorded the implied reader” in the prologue is somehow lacking. This faith is just “words.”¹¹ Staley opines, “There is much more to the journey of faith than mere orthodox confessional statements.”¹²

Staley believes that the implied author impresses this upon the implied reader with a sort of literary sleight-of-hand.¹³ First, the author brings the reader into his confidence by clueing him into the true identity of Jesus (1:1–18); but then he pulls a trick on the reader that undermines this confidence. Before examining the literary chicane Staley purports to identify, let us examine his idea of how the author wins the reader’s confidence.

Staley’s analysis here has much in common with Culpepper’s analysis of the author’s relationship to his implied readers.¹⁴ Both see the author’s act of inviting the reader to share his omniscient point of view as his first step in setting up the reader to receive literary signals. Both believe the reader derives some sort of satisfaction from knowing “more” than the characters in the gospel whom Jesus encounters. According to Staley, “The implied reader feels he is better than [the characters whom Jesus encounters]. . . . The implied reader [rests] comfortably, feeling that his knowledge is superior to that of the disciples.”¹⁵ The implied reader, according to Staley enjoys being an insider and, as an insider, bonds with the point of view of a fellow insider, the narrator.

Once the bonding is complete, however, the narrator, takes the reader down a notch. Just as the reader begins to think that he or she understands Jesus, along with those characters in the gospel who are said to “believe,” the author unsettles the reader’s confidence. To do this, the implied author “victimizes” the implied reader, allowing the implied reader to think he or she understands Jesus only to have Jesus act in a manner contrary to his or her expectations.¹⁶

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Staley adheres rigorously to the terms “implied author” and “implied reader.” Both he says are intratextual features of the gospel. The implied author is the unifying voice around which the text coheres (*The Print*, 27–30). “The implied reader is the affective quality of the text. It is an entity evoked and continually nurtured by the text; it is affected by the text’s strategies and moved towards the implied author’s goals. . . . It is an intratextual entity evoked by the temporal quality of the narrative” (*The Print*, 33–34).

¹⁴ Culpepper, however, does not believe that the author ever gives the reader unreliable information (*Anatomy*, 43–49).

¹⁵ Staley, *The Print*, 110. See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 175–179.

¹⁶ As examples of the implied author’s “victimization strategy,” Staley produces

Over the course of the narrative, the reader also learns that the believing confessions of the disciples themselves lacked substance. They “were not much more than words.”¹⁷ To prove this, Staley refers his readers to verses in which Jesus’ disciples display less than perfect faith (i.e., 13:36–38; 14:8–10; 16:16–33). The reader learns the “uncomfortable” lesson that there are things about Jesus that remain hidden, which even “the eyes of faith” cannot penetrate.¹⁸

A close examination of the examples Staley gives reveals that his treatment of these supposed victimizations exaggerates their possible effect upon the reader, implied or otherwise. His first example of a “victimization” is Jn. 4:1–2. In 4:1, John states, “The Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John.” This reaffirms John’s statement of 3:22 in which he states that Jesus baptized with his disciples. Staley states that John’s statement in 4:2 (“although Jesus himself did not baptize, only his disciples”) reveals to the reader that “he had only been set up in order to be hoodwinked.”¹⁹

The reader, according to Staley, is meant to feel that he or she is no longer among the uniquely informed elite but is now “in the same category as the Pharisees²⁰ . . . [who too] had heard that Jesus was . . . baptizing” (4:1). The reader as well had heard that Jesus was “baptizing” but learns in 4:2 that he was not. The reader, who knows the Pharisees to be “outsiders and know nothings,”²¹ thus loses any feelings of superiority.

Mercifully, the implied author leaves the implied reader in this situation only temporarily. The implied author soon will regain the implied reader’s trust with a compliment of sorts. With the story of the Samaritan woman, the implied author “tips his hand to the

several seemingly contradictory statements made by the author. The reader is told something about Jesus which he or she believes to be true only to be told in the next verse that it is not true. Thus, the author momentarily loses the reader’s trust (Staley, *The Print*, 96–98). One example is 7:1–10 where the author tells the reader that Jesus did not dare walk about in Jerusalem since the Jews sought to kill him (7:1). The author then has Jesus tell his brothers he is not going up to Jerusalem (7:8) only next to have Jesus go up to Jerusalem (7:10). The reader thus learns that the author is not always reliable (Staley, *The Print*, 103–105).

¹⁷ Ibid., 96–118.

¹⁸ Ibid., 105.

¹⁹ Ibid., 98.

²⁰ Ibid., 116.

²¹ Ibid., 98.

reader and his knowledge of Hebrew scripture” as he invites the reader again to share in the “intimate fellowship” of the narrator’s insider’s outlook with a parody of an Old Testament type scene, the meeting of prospective a bride at a well. Here the implied author, with his invocation of an inter-textual code, “boldly wins back the implied reader’s trust after it had been tested by the victimization strategy of 4:1–2.”²²

Staley assumes that, in the period of narrative time that passes between 3:22 and 4:2, the reader becomes meaningfully attached to the idea that Jesus baptized with his own hands.²³ He also assumes that the issue of whether or not Jesus baptized with his own hands is so important to the reader that he or she would feel “hoodwinked” upon discovering that Jesus himself did not perform baptisms. Even if a reader felt betrayed by the author, it is unlikely that the reader would then feel him or herself to be “in the same category as the Pharisees” because the Pharisees also had thought that Jesus personally performed baptisms. Staley’s other examples of “victimizations” are equally unconvincing.²⁴

²² This method of invoking an inter-textual code, according to Staley, is an especially effective way for an author to woo a reader to his side. The reader feels special knowing that he or she shares the same background knowledge as the author (Staley, *The Print*, 98–103).

²³ Staley borrows his method of analysis from John McKee’s *Literary Irony and the Literary Audience: Studies in the Victimization of the Reader in Augustan Fiction* (Amsterdam: Ropodi, 1974). His application of McKee’s method is questionable. Staley himself quotes McKee, “The implied reader which the implied author of the gospel forms is thus like some of those real readers whom McKee described as ‘inexperienced in reader-victimizing irony . . . , [who do] not become aware of the ironist’s intentions toward them until *late in the game* [emphasis mine], after they have committed [themselves] to several conclusions which the author shows to be invalid” (*The Print*, 98). Can one realistically view Jn. 4:2 as “late in the game” in relation to 3:22?

²⁴ See Staley, *The Print*, 104–116. As another example of reader victimization Staley adduces the sudden and unexpected introduction of the “beloved disciple” in 13:1–30. Before this introduction, the reader had been enjoying that feeling of privilege that goes along with being an insider. In these verses the disciples question Jesus as to the identity of the betrayer. The reader has long known it is Judas (cf. 6:71). The reader basks in feelings of superiority over the ignorant disciples. But suddenly, the reader discovers that the disciples know something he does not: the identity of the beloved disciple! Again “victimized” by the narrator, the reader, stung from the betrayal, tumbles from a privileged perspective to wallow with the rabble upon whom he or she had just been looking down. Staley connects the uncertainties that the reader experiences to the uncertainties to be encountered on the journey to faith. The reader must learn to accept that one cannot fully comprehend the Lord and therefore must attempt not to comprehend him but to follow him (*The Print*, 109–111).

Staley's analysis of these "victimizations" shares much with O'Day's analysis of John's use of irony.²⁵ John, they postulate, purposefully leaves gaps in the narrative. His rhetorical technique works on the reader's psyche and causes the reader to struggle with the theological issues exposed by these gaps. Staley states:

As with the other victimizations, the implied author is driving home the point that there will always be unknown properties and gaps in the journey of faith—just as there are in the story itself. The issue before the implied reader in these rhetorical situations, then, is not to solve the problems, but, having faced them squarely, to recognize his limitations and go on to faith²⁶

Staley fails, however, to explain why the real reader might want to go on to faith. Even if Staley's conclusions regarding the rhetorical mechanics of the text were correct, even if the "implied reader" could be led through a series of "victimizations" to see that faith is an uncertain venture, he does not make clear how these conclusions translate into the lives of real readers. Staley indicates that "faith" is the point of the gospel. In his work's conclusion, he states:

The text's evasive but no less intriguing and provocative strategies—typified by its occasional undermining of a symbolic code, withholding information, and misdirection—covertly invite the implied reader (and thus real readers) to learn, not only from the words themselves²⁷ but also from the reading experience, what the nature of faith really is.²⁸

For Staley, the essential message of the gospel is: "Faith is a hard road to travel," and little more. According to Staley, John teaches his readers the "nature" of faith. He correctly surmises that faith cannot be based on hard and fast, indisputably proven, intellectual data. His analysis of the text, however, remains unconvincing. Such a single-minded emphasis on the difficulty of faith misses the point of John's presentation. The present study strives to see how John builds up in his readers a picture of the object of faith. Staley seems determined to avoid saying that the gospel has an external referent. By focusing excessively on how John presents "the journey of faith"

²⁵ See the second chapter of this book.

²⁶ Staley, *The Print*, 110.

²⁷ Note Staley's curious separation of the reading experience from the "words" of the text.

²⁸ Staley, *The Print*, 117.

rather than on how he discloses the object of faith, Staley does the text an injustice. John tries to convince his readers to believe in the identity of a specific person (20:31) as experienced from the point of view of his community. He does not simply ask them to believe without specifying the content of that which is to be believed.

Although he claims only to analyze the intra-textual character of John's rhetoric, Staley ultimately shunts his readers off to an extra-textual referent when he asks, "In spite of his unanswered questions, will the implied reader still be able to hold to his confession of 20:30–31, and follow?"²⁹ "Follow what?" one must ask. When the book ends, what or whom will the "implied reader," (an internal construct of the text) follow? Here, Staley can only be implying that the "real reader" (an extra-textual entity) should or would follow some extra-textual referent. In the final pages of his book, Staley inadvertently avers that the text points to some object, an object the author asks the reader to "follow." He pays little attention to how John attempts to specify this object that they are required to follow.

According to the gospel, the act of "following" to which Staley refers can only be that which leads to eternal life (10:4; 13:36). An author will scarcely win a reader's confidence in a matter so unfathomable as the way to eternal "life" through a series of carefully crafted canards. Furthermore, Staley's rather tenuously constructed arguments do not indicate that John attempts such a venture. Rather, John attempts to describe his experience of the Son of God in order that his readers might recognize this experience in their own lives and follow him.³⁰

John does more than to ask the reader to persevere in the face of uncertainty regarding the text's account of the life of Jesus. Rather, the uncertainty he seeks to describe is a symptom of the relationship between the transcendent God and humanity. As we have seen, John consistently portrays this relationship throughout the gospel. The object he portrays is an experience, namely his community's experience of Jesus as God's life-giving son (11:25).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ I agree with Culpepper that the narrator of the gospel is always reliable. He holds nothing back. He is "omnicommunicative" (*Anatomy*, 48).

Jesus Revealed in Terms of Anthropology

I began to demonstrate in Chapters Three and Four of this book that John discloses Jesus' identity by setting him in contrast with others. John's placing Jesus *vis-à-vis* his earthly-minded auditors reveals to the reader a gap between Jesus' perspective and that of his hearers. This "gap" delineates that boundary where Jesus' audience must rely upon the action of Jesus in order to gain access to the heavenly realities to which he alone has access.

At this juncture, however, my own mode of analysis might seem to run up against a difficulty quite similar to the one I outlined in Culpepper's analysis of the gospel's plot. In the prologue, John has declared to his readers that Jesus is God's *logos* (1:1-5, 14a), his only begotten son (1:14b). With each encounter between Jesus and his earthly interlocutors, John emphasizes that Jesus alone, by dint of his unique relation to his father, has access to life giving, heavenly realities. At first glance it might appear that with each new scene in his gospel John repeats this same basic message.

One begins to realize, however, that each character that meets Jesus in the gospel encounters him in a different way and thus reveals something about Jesus that the other characters cannot. With each character, John further draws the contours of humanity's experience of Jesus. The picture that John attempts to build in the minds of his readers embodies a "realistic" anthropology. John's characters are believable. He does not depict the actions of either Jesus' disciples or opponents in anything but realistic terms.³¹ This is especially true of Jesus' opponents. There is nothing mysterious in their behavior. They reject his claims to being God's son as outlandish (8:57), blasphemous (10:33), and dangerous to the well-being of the Jewish nation (11:47-50). The historical fate of Jesus bears out that these reactions are not mythic depictions. In the context of this realistic anthropology, Jesus resists the characterizations of those who insist on judging him according to their own terms. The gospel prepares

³¹ By "realistic" I mean that, for the most part, John does not idealize those characters that Jesus meets in the gospel. They are not portrayed in mythic or super-human terms. They do not have transcendent insights into Jesus' identity. They react as typical humans. Recall the call of Nathanael (1:46-48a). Indeed we have seen both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman portrayed as all too human. See also the reaction of his disciples in 4:33.

its readers to see the world as John's community sees it and to experience the Son of God as it does, on his own terms (cf. 3:3, 8; 6:14–15).

With his characterizations, John seeks to reveal the human tendency to judge according to worldly standards, to impose pre-conceived limits on how God's son might choose to reveal himself (cf. 1:46; 3:4; 4:27; 5:16; 6:41; 7:3–5, 42; 8:52–53; 9:16; 10:33; 20:25). They fail to see that he is the very source of their lives (1:10–13). John makes it clear that humans are dependent upon the saving action of Jesus for the corrective of this bleak state (1:12). They do not know their true nature until he transcends their worldly expectations (1:48; 4:29, 48–53 etc.). This is a central notion in the anthropological picture John presents to his readers through those characters who meet Jesus over the course of the gospel. This notion is most clearly evinced in the case of Thomas (20:24–29).

In the second part of the gospel (5:1–10:42), John clearly presents an anthropological condition as the cause of the enmity that arises towards Jesus. This clash derives from the difference between Jesus' very mode of being and that of his adversaries. As long as one judges according to the standards of "the world" (cf. 7:7), one fails to recognize Jesus as Savior. John emphasizes that true life can only be had through a fundamental change from a this-worldly manner of being to a manner of being that entails the rebirth of faith (cf. 3:3; 17:14). In the prologue, John emphasized that it is only through the will and the action of God's son that such a rebirth is possible (1:12–13). In the encounter with Thomas, John closes his gospel with the same point (20:27).

Leander Keck and "Of-ness"

In his article, "Derivation as Destiny: 'Of-ness' in Johannine Christology, Anthropology, and Soteriology," Leander Keck³² clearly details John's presentation regarding the believer's mode of being in contrast to that of non-believers. He notes that John designates the ontic status of characters in the gospel based upon their places of origin. To do this, John makes special use of the preposition "ἐκ" (of, from).

³² Do not be misled by the title of Keck's article. He argues against the idea that John subscribes to a fatalistic pre-determination.

Those who do not share the same place of origin,³³ those who do not share the same “of-ness,” as Keck calls it, do not share the same ontic status and thus do not and cannot perceive the same things.³⁴ Thus, John begins his gospel by defining the Word’s ontic status in terms of its “whence,” its “of-ness” (1:1–5, 9–11, 14, 18).³⁵ The “Word” has its origin in the beginning with the Father (1:1–2). It is this Word who comes into the world as the only begotten son of the Father (1:14).

In the prologue, John also defines those believers who become children of God in terms of their ontic status. They, who do not share Jesus’ origins, if they wish to share in the life he offers, must change their “whence.” They must undergo an extraordinary change and be reborn “not of [ἐκ] blood, nor of [ἐκ] the will of the flesh, nor of [ἐκ] the will of man, but of [ἐκ] God” (1:13). Only those who undergo such a change (3:5, 31) perceive the truth; only these share in the life Jesus has to offer.

John expressly tells his readers that, because Jesus and his earthly auditors do not share the same place of origin, the true meaning of Jesus’ words remains remote from them. In 3:31–34 we read, “‘He who comes from above is above all; he who is of [ἐκ] the earth belongs to [ἐκ] the earth and of [ἐκ] the earth he speaks; he who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard.’” Jesus bears witness to that to which only he has access.

In his description of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, John reveals to his readers that the rebirth of which Jesus speaks involves a *change* of one’s “whence.” “‘Unless one is born of [ἐκ] water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of [ἐκ] flesh is flesh, and that which is born of [ἐκ] is Spirit.’” Being “of flesh” precludes one from comprehending that which is “of Spirit.” Thus, to those who are of flesh, the Spirit and the truths it offers appear as the wind, “‘The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes’” (3:8).³⁶ Jesus is “from above.” Those who do not perceive

³³ Here, one’s point of origin is judged in its most primary sense in John’s dualistic schema. One either has a heavenly origin or an earthly one.

³⁴ Leander E. Keck, “Derivation as Destiny: ‘Of-ness’ in Johannine Christology, Anthropology, and Soteriology,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, eds. R.A. Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 274–275.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 275–276.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 277–278.

his truth are “from below.” It is the clash between Jesus and those who do not share his “of-ness” that precipitates the crisis we shall see arise in the gospel’s second section.³⁷ Notably, however, it is in this same clash that one comes to recognize that which is transcendent.

There is a reciprocal relationship between one’s experience of one’s own ontic status and one’s experience of the divine Other. It is the confrontation with the divine that allows one to perceive the limited and dependent nature of one’s self. The knowledge of one’s ontic status comes only through the revelation of another who transcends one’s level of being. Thus, as Jesus comes as the revealer of his own “whence,” he simultaneously exposes the contours of the “whence” of his hearers.³⁸

This revelation is a saving proclamation in that,

It is precisely in being confronted with the self-presentation of the Other-as-Jesus that one is also confronted by the extent to which one is ‘of this world.’ Given the character and power of ‘this world’ such confrontation is necessary if one is to see the situation to grasp the possibility of being free from it.³⁹

That his readers come to recognize their status as subjects with regard to Jesus as the divine Other is the primary goal of John’s presentation, for it is only with an accurate understanding of self that one can begin to perceive Jesus as the object of faith. John,

³⁷ Says Keck, “When Jesus says, ‘You are of this world,’ he is not simply identifying his opponents as earthlings. . . . Rather, he is making an anthropological accusation about the derivation of their real nature; he is identifying the hostile ‘whence’ that accounts for their obduracy. . . . Their resistance to him actualizes and demonstrates their ‘of-ness’” (“Derivation,” 280).

³⁸ According to Keck, Jesus is unique in this revelatory role. “[He] is the only character in the gospel who uses language [in this specific sense]. The disciples hear it but do not repeat it, nor do his opponents pick it up in order to contrast it. It is part of Jesus’ distinctly revelatory proclamation. . . .” (“Derivation,” 282). Scholars do not universally hold that Jesus is the only character to use this language. In 3:31–36, it is difficult to determine who the speaker is. Since these verses come on the heels of a speech by the John the Baptist, with no change in speaker, many take the Baptist to be the speaker. See Haenchen, *John* I, 211; Barrett, *John*, 188. Because the style of speech found in these verses typifies the style of Jesus’ speech, Schnackenburg, Brown, and Bultmann all assign the passage to the lips of Jesus. For a summary of these opinions, see Brown, *John I–XII*, 159–60. In the context of a strictly synchronic reading, however, one must take the Baptist as the speaker. His knowledge of his own limitations with regard to Jesus can, nonetheless, be attributed to his own contact with Jesus seen as a person who transcends human limitations (cf. 1:29–33).

³⁹ Keck, “Derivation,” 281–282.

therefore, does not define Jesus in formulaic statements. Nor does he outline step by step a route to salvation. Rather he presents Jesus in terms of his community's experience of him as the one who comes from above (cf. 3:31). For it is only contact with God's son, the sole revealer of heavenly truths, that reveals the truth of one's own being and thus the truth of one's total reliance upon him as the source of one's life.

Analysis of Part Two (5:1–10:42)

Nowhere in the gospel is John's depiction of the "otherness" of Jesus in relation to humans more acutely outlined than in the second section of the gospel's tripartite narrative structure. Here, Jesus is most clearly perceived in contrast to the this-worldly reactions of those who oppose him. As those who are unequivocally "of this world," Jesus' opponents remain immured within the limits of their misconstrued world-view. They await a pre-defined messiah. This group refuses to accept Jesus in his transcendent role as God's son simply because he operates outside the precincts over which they have control.⁴⁰ Seeing Jesus' opponents as John depicts them, as sensible by worldly standards (cf. 1:46; 3:4; 6:42; 7:3–4, 42; 8:57; 10:20), John's readers will be able to understand intimately the kind of categorical change in being that "faith" entails, the kind of categorical change that Thomas will undergo in the gospel's climax.

The Healing of the Lame Man and the Discourse that Follows (5:1–47)

This passage that forms the beginning of the second of the gospel's three parts plays a unique role among the miracles John recounts to his readers. It does not serve to demonstrate the relationship between the works Jesus performs and the faith responses that they elicit. Rather, it serves to emphasize the division that exists between Jesus and the world; thus, it serves to reveal Jesus in relation to humanity.

To this point in the narrative, John has connected each of Jesus' miracles with some sort of faith response. At the wedding in Cana, when Jesus changed the water into wine, "his disciples believed in

⁴⁰ Bultmann, *John*, 61.

him" (2:11). Seeing the signs Jesus performed during a Passover feast in Jerusalem, "many believed in his name" (2:33). After Jesus heals the royal official's son, the official and "his entire household" believed (4:53). The passage I shall now examine, the healing of the lame man at the pool (5:1-9), follows on the heels of this cure.

This healing, however, does not elicit the faith response John's readers have by now come to expect.⁴¹ Rather, this miracle produces, on the part of Jesus' Jerusalem audience, a reaction of enmity. Indeed, in direct relation to this miracle, John makes no reference to faith at all.⁴² The remarkable thing to which John does refer immediately after the cure is the day on which the cure is performed, "the sabbath" (5:9b). Because, on this day, he ordered the lame man, "'Arise, take up your pallet and walk'" (5:8), Jesus' opponents erroneously perceive him to be in conflict with their law.⁴³ This perceived conflict, not the miracle itself, becomes the focus of these verses (5:9b-47).⁴⁴

In the verses concerning the healing proper (5:1-9), John presents two themes with which the reader is now familiar. The first is Jesus' supernatural insight into the thoughts of humans (5:6, cf. 1:47-48; 2:24-25; 4:17-18). The second is his habit of following only his own divine initiative and working outside the realm of human concern (5:7-8, cf. 2:1-11; 3:1-15; 4:1-26, 43-54). By combining both these themes in one scene, John will clearly establish Jesus on his transcendent, Godly footing before he encounters his opponents who operate from a worldly stance. He thus prepares his readers to perceive the immensity of the error Jesus' opponents make in failing to

⁴¹ Culpepper, "A Sample," 198-202. Culpepper observes a set, seven-step form in John's presentation of Jesus' signs. The steps are: 1) a supplicant requests the miracle, 2) Jesus rebuffs the request, 3) the supplicant persists, 4) Jesus gives instructions to grant request, 5) the sign is accomplished, 6) the sign is verified, 7) there is a faith response. He notes that the healing of the man at the pool breaks this pattern on several counts and expects that the reader will notice the divergence from the pattern. I agree that the absence of a faith response is notable but do not agree that John established a sign "form" with the two preceding narrated signs (2:1-11; 4:46-54).

⁴² Jesus twice speaks of faith in the ensuing discourse; but in neither instance does he speak of it in reference to this healing. In 5:24, Jesus states that eternal life will be given the one who hears his word and believes. In 5:44, he relates the Jews' inability to come to faith to their practice of seeking glory from one another rather than from God.

⁴³ Here the Jewish law serves as a positive background for Jesus to demonstrate his divine right to act on the Sabbath.

⁴⁴ Verses 5:1-47 comprise one large unit. See Culpepper, "A Sample," 196.

perceive what Jesus discloses about himself (and his Father) with this work.⁴⁵

John begins this account by describing the dire condition of the lame man and thereby establishes the prodigious nature of the hurdle that Jesus will overcome with ease. The man has been ill, with severely limited ability to walk (if any at all) (5:3, 7), for “thirty-eight years” (5:5). John also emphasizes Jesus’ supernatural insight into human affairs. As Jesus arrives at the pool, he needs no one to tell him of the lame man’s illness. Seeing the man, Jesus “knew he had been lying there a long time” (5:6a).

The action that follows is significant for two reasons. First, in contrast to the miracles in chapters two and four, Jesus receives no request to perform the miracle. He asks the man, “‘Do you want to be healed?’” (5:6b). Jesus initiates the action. Thus, John makes it clear that it is Jesus’ will that the man be healed. The second point of significance becomes clear to the reader when he or she reaches John’s declaration that the healing took place on the sabbath (5:9b). Since Jesus himself initiated the action, there can be no mistake that he intended to work this healing on the sabbath.⁴⁶

John’s presentation of the man’s response to Jesus provides the reader with further insight into Jesus as he stands in relation to humanity. Jesus’ concerns are above the mundane affairs of the one he heals. The man responds to Jesus’ question, “‘Sir, I have no man to put me in the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me’” (5:7). The man has no idea whom he addresses as he issues his typically human complaint. His plight is impossible. The infirmity for which he seeks a cure is itself

⁴⁵ An observation of Wolfgang Iser’s concerning an author’s preparation of his or her readers is here helpful. During the reading process components of the narrative build upon one another forming a story structure in the reader’s mind. Each new segment of the narrative finds its foundation on that which preceded it. Iser states, “The theme of one moment becomes the background against which the next segment takes on its actuality” (Quoted in P.P.A. Kotzé’s “John and Reader’s Response,” *Neotestamentica* 19 [1985]: 53). In this case, John fills the miracle with the details of Jesus’ divine insight (5:6) and the efficacy of his word (5:8–9). These themes become the background against which he will demonstrate the unbelief of the Jews. The reason for their unbelief (5:18) then becomes the background for his self-revelation (5:19–47).

⁴⁶ Haenchen, *John* I, 246. Haenchen states that Jesus deliberately “provokes” this conflict over his right to do the work of his Father. Considering the foreknowledge Jesus exhibits in the gospel (cf. 18:4), this may well be the case.

the thing that prevents him from reaching the curing agent. Most probably the man's words are more than a personal lament. Considering that they are addressed to the able-bodied Jesus, they are likely a veiled request for Jesus to wait with him until the waters are troubled and then carry him down.⁴⁷

Jesus pays no heed to the man's prolix complaints. Rather, he operates on another level and acts according to his own will. With a command, "Arise, take up your pallet and walk" (5:8), Jesus heals the man. The man's answer to Jesus' simple question was unduly long and replete with the everyday details of the man's frustrating plight. It was meant to evoke sympathy. Yet, with Jesus' curt response, John emphasizes that Jesus' mode of operation is not of the earthly sphere. He appears aloof and unconcerned with the man's complaint. Rather he acts according to his own concerns and simply heals the man. John's description of the result of Jesus' command is meant to impress the reader. "Immediately" the man rises and walks. With his use of the adverb "immediately" (εὐθέως), John emphasizes that it is Jesus' action, and his action alone, that effects the cure.⁴⁸

At this point, in contrast to what the reader might expect, there is neither a mention of the man's grateful reaction nor a mention of his faith.⁴⁹ Rather, John interrupts the story with a foreboding temporal announcement, "Now that day was the sabbath" (5:9b). Simultaneous with this declaration, the author expands the reader's view of the arena in which the man walks about carrying his pallet. He is in the world of the legalistic, religious rigorists on their holy day. They immediately confront the man and inform him that he acts in violation of their law (5:10).

From this point on, John gives little detail regarding the man's actions. For instance, we are never told whether or not he desists

⁴⁷ It is not necessary to follow commentators such as Brown or Culpepper who fault the man for lacking the will to make himself well, or Dodd who sees the man's failure to go to the pool as a failure to pursue the gift of the Spirit. See Culpepper, "A Sample," 204; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 319 ff. Schnackenburg and Haenchen are correct in asserting that the psychological state of the man is not the point. Rather the man's answer details the "bleakness of the situation" (Haenchen, *John* I, 244. See also Schnackenburg, *John* II, 95, 97).

⁴⁸ John produces a similar effect with his use of "immediately" (εὐθέως) in 6:21. The moment the disciples take Jesus into the boat, their journey is completed. See Giblin, "The Miraculous Crossing of the Sea (John 6:16-21)," *NTS* 29, (1982): 96-101.

⁴⁹ Haenchen is correct in stating, "The thought that the sick ought to participate in the cure is foreign to the evangelist" (*John* I, 246).

from the illegal activity. The lack of detail makes it clear that the man and his motivations are not the focus of the narrative. He serves simply as a bridge connecting Jesus and his actions to his opponents and their law.⁵⁰

Almost immediately, Jesus becomes involved in the controversy over the man's actions. When the Jews point out the unlawful nature of the man's activity, "It is not lawful for you to carry your pallet" (5:10), the man answers, "The man who made me well said to me, Take up your pallet and walk" (5:11). The Jews pay no heed to the remarkable way by which the man refers to Jesus. He did, after all, call him "the man who made me well." Rather, they seize solely upon Jesus' identity as the one who issued the command to break the sabbath law. They demand, "Who is the man who said to you Take up your pallet and walk?" (5:12). The man cannot tell them, since Jesus vanished into the crowd after the healing (5:13).⁵¹

Notably, it is Jesus again who initiates the action. He is the one who finds the man in the temple (5:14). Jesus observes the man's condition telling him, "See you are well." He then warns the man, "Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you" (5:14). This further contact on Jesus' part enables the man to identify Jesus to his opponents and allows the reader to see that the discourse that follows is initiated by Jesus' actions. Jesus' initiative creates an opportunity for him to identify himself further in relation to his father (5:17–43). He is the one who brings life as an alternative to judgment (5:24).⁵²

⁵⁰ Here I agree with Schnackenburg (*John* II, 97–98) and Haenchen (*John* I, 246–248). Culpepper postulates that the lack of detail concerning the man and his motives indicates that John focuses on the man's lack of faith rather than the man himself ("A Sample," 198–205).

⁵¹ Brown faults the man for not knowing Jesus' identity. He states, "The fact that he had let his benefactor slip away without even asking his name is . . . an instance of real dullness" (Brown, *John* I, 209). Such a negative assessment, however, is not warranted. The man, upon receiving Jesus' command, responded "immediately" and began walking. While the man walked, it was Jesus who "withdrew" into the crowd. The scarcity of detail indicates that the evangelist has little interest in portraying the psychological makeup of the man.

⁵² Jesus speaks of the eschatological realities in terms of both a future resurrection (5:25, 28–29) and a present reality (5:25). The focus of these verses is not temporal but personal. In both, the alternatives of life and judgment are offered. Each of these alternatives presupposes one's relationship to Jesus. He is the one who offers life in the present as an alternative to judgment. He is also responsible for the life to be given in the final resurrection. With Jesus' warning to the man (5:14), John refers his readers to the possibility of future eschatological judgment. The healing of the man symbolizes Jesus' ability to give life in the present. The focus of

The man returns directly to those who would judge Jesus and tells them that it was Jesus who cured him (5:15).⁵³ At this point, he leaves the scene never to be heard from again. The man has served his principal role in the narrative. He has brought Jesus into contact with his adversaries. He has also effected the introduction in a particular context, one that will allow John to discuss the principal concern of the gospel: Jesus' identity.⁵⁴

Jesus issued his healing command on the sabbath, and so "the Jews began to persecute Jesus" (5:16). But it is the way in which Jesus justifies his actions that inflames them all the more. Jesus responds to his persecutors, "'My Father is working still, and I am working'" (5:17).⁵⁵ He not only calls God his Father but also states

this two-fold eschatology is therefore christological. Jesus is the one through whom these events take place (Giblin, "Two Complementary Structures," 98–99).

⁵³ Several commentators identify this act on the part of the man as cowardice or treachery. Fortna says of the man's original answer to the Jews in 5:11: "The man cravenly insists that he is only obeying orders." Fortna also identifies the man as one who "turns informer on Jesus to the authorities" (Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor*, 116). Culpepper identifies the man as an ingrate who betrays Jesus to the Jews and thus falls back into sin. With his warning, "sin no more," Jesus refers to the man's act of betrayal. Thus, Culpepper states that it is not necessary to see this verse as a contradiction to 9:2. To take 9:2 as proof that the evangelist did not see infirmity as the result of sin is to reason from one specific instance to a general rule. John is not here giving a commentary on the wages of sin. Rather, he is concerned with Jesus' actions. The blindness of the man in Chapter Nine provides an occasion for the manifestation of God's glory. The man's actions, according to Culpepper, provide proof that "he is bound to his infirmity. Even when Jesus heals him, he remains a crippled person bound to himself and to sin because he will not open himself and respond with faith to Jesus" (Culpepper, "A Sample," 204–205). Craig R. Koester also contends that the man remains faithless and bound to sin, (*Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995], 54, 88).

Jeffrey L. Staley attempts to show that the lame man provides an example of faith and a positive witness to Jesus. But the text no more warrants this than it does the conclusions of Culpepper. He is correct, however, when he states that his reading is just as legitimate as those of Culpepper and Koester "in view of the fact that neither the narrator nor Jesus condemns [the man]—either implicitly or explicitly" (Jeffrey L. Staley, "Stumbling in the Dark, Reaching for the Light: Reading Character in John 5 and 9," *Semeia* 53 [1991]: 55–80). I agree with Schnackenburg who states, "Nothing is said . . . in the gospel about [the lame man's] motive, and that kind of exegesis [the sort that gives the man a motive] in any case results in a misunderstanding of the evangelist's intention as an author, namely to bring the Jews into contact with Jesus. . . ." (*John II*, 99). Haenchen provides a similar assessment of the lame man's role in the narrative (*John I*, 244).

⁵⁴ Giblin observes that, generally, in Part Two, "the sign and discourse also move from what Jesus has done to who he is" (Giblin, "Tripartite," 463).

⁵⁵ Schnackenburg demonstrates that Jesus is arguing according to rabbinical teachings regarding God's work on the sabbath. He notes the comment of Rabbi Phinehas

that he possesses the prerogative to work on the sabbath, a prerogative only God enjoys. The implication of this statement is not lost on the Jews. John tells his readers, "This is why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but called God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (5:18).⁵⁶

For the Jews, who here represent judgment according to earthly standards, Jesus' actions can be understood only as sinful. So long as they continue to judge him, to measure him against their standards, they will fail to see him properly. For them to impose their standards upon Jesus is for them to mask the truth. John reveals this explicitly towards the end of the gospel's second section (cf. 9:41).

The controversy begins as a dispute over Jesus' supposedly sabbath-breaking command and escalates into a dispute over Jesus' identity. Here John reaches the crux of the issue. It is one's acceptance or rejection of Jesus' identity, as he reveals it, that ultimately separates believers from the enemies of Jesus. Jesus explains to his opponents that his unique right to work on the sabbath stems from his identity and comes only as a result of his relationship to the Father. His actions cannot be separated from their ultimate source. "Jesus said to them . . . 'the Son can do nothing of his own accord but only what he sees the Father doing'" (5:19a, 30). Jesus tells his opponents that the works he does serve the Father's purpose, and, in accordance with the Father's will, he will do greater works so they will "marvel" (5:20b).⁵⁷

in *Gen. rabba II* (ca. 360) on Gen. 2:2 ff. He states that on the seventh day God rests from his works on the world but not from his works of punishing or rewarding the unrighteous and the righteous. He also notes Philo who postulates that God "never ceases to act since he is the source of all action in all other beings" (*John II*, 101, n. 26).

⁵⁶ See Giblin, "Tripartite," 461, n. 25. Giblin makes the significant observation that "the 'sign' in John 5 is called simply a 'work.' The latter term, admittedly, fits a wider and generally more vague classification; it refers to what Jesus *did*. This particular 'sign,' however, appropriately receives no further designation than the term 'work,' because its central point concerns what only God (or his Son, a divine person) can *do/work* on the sabbath" ("Tripartite," 461, n. 25).

⁵⁷ With "greater works" John's Jesus most probably refers to his eschatological function of giving life rather than simply to his performing more miracles. This becomes clear when one considers the verse that follows (5:21) in which Jesus refers directly to his raising the dead. Haenchen stresses that John writes from a post-Easter perspective and thus telescopes into the life of Jesus the glory believers are to perceive (7:39) (Haenchen, *John I*, 250–251). See also Schnackenburg, *John II*, 105 and Lindars, *John*, 221–222. From the post-resurrection perspective, all of Jesus'

Jesus further clarifies his relationship with the Father. He shares in his Father's life giving work. "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will" (5:21).⁵⁸ It is the Son's prerogative to give this life "to whom he will." Those who do not receive life receive the judgment that is also the Son's right to execute (5:22). He and the Father are one in action, and Jesus thus deserves the honor due the Father (5:23).⁵⁹ Jesus connects the honor he deserves to the belief he also deserves. "He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life; he does not come into judgment but passes from death to life" (5:24). Here, Jesus does not speak of belief in himself, as he does elsewhere; instead, he speaks of belief in the one who sent him. The two are inseparable.

John's Purpose in Connecting the Miracle to the Controversy

With his presentation of the controversy that arises over this miracle performed on the sabbath, John highlights the divide that prevents those who see from the earthly perspective from those who see the true identity of Jesus. In 5:25–47 he reveals the reason for the divide.

Being ignorant of Jesus' true identity, the Jews level the false charge against him that he is "making himself equal with God" (5:18b). In their eyes he is guilty of blasphemy. The charge is, of course, false

words and works (miraculous and otherwise) must be considered to be manifestations of the Father's glory and thus must all be united under the rubric of "greater works" (cf. 2:22; 7:39; 12:16; 14:26; 16:12–14).

⁵⁸ In Jewish apocalyptic thought, it is God, of course, who is responsible for the resurrection of the elect and the judgment of the unrighteous. See Dan. 7:14; 12:2. Jesus thus assumes the right to do that which only God has the right to do (Schnackenburg, *John II*, 106–108). In so doing he offends his opponents. In I Enoch, God gives the Son of Man a role in judgment (I Enoch 37–41). In light of 5:18, however, it is best to assume that Jesus' role as that figure is not under discussion here.

⁵⁹ See Pierre Létourneau, "La gloire de Jésus: Gloire et glorification dans le IV^e Évangile," *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 51 (octobre, 1995): 551–572. Létourneau emphasizes that John here presents Jesus as the Father's envoy. He notes that, in the Old Testament, God's glory is seen in the manifestation of his power as life giving creator and savior. As the Father's envoy, Jesus brings demonstrations of this power to humans and is thus due the same glory due the Father. One who rejects Jesus, who refuses to see his glory in his signs, does not reject Jesus alone. Jesus is the envoy of the Father. To reject him is to reject the Father and thus to become subject to judgment ("La gloire de Jésus," 557–558, 568).

since Jesus does not “make” himself equal to God.⁶⁰ John repeats and further develops this false charge two more times: at the end of Part Two (10:33) and in the hearing before Pilate (19:7). Jesus’ further assertion that he is worthy of the honor due the Father only serves further to convince them of his blasphemy. It is unlikely that John presents this discussion in order to demonstrate that Jesus attempted to sway the Jews to his side with either the promise of life or the threat of judgment. Rather, John continues to outline for the reader the chasm that separates the otherworldly perspective of Jesus from that of his auditors.

The reason for their failure to recognize the truth of Jesus, as John puts it, is their fundamental inability to do so (5:38, 44). This inability stems from their very mode of existence. Since they do not believe (5:38), they do not share in the life that comes from above (3:5, 31). They, who seek “‘glory from one another’” (5:44), are “‘of the earth’” and thus see glory in earthly terms alone. They have not undergone the fundamental transformation of origin that “belief” entails (1:12–13).⁶¹ Their judgment is therefore of an earthly sort and they have not the ability to comprehend that which only Jesus can comprehend (cf. 3:31).

John further elaborates that Jesus is the unique source of testimony that leads to life. He compares Jesus’ testimony to the well-received testimony of John the Baptist (cf. 1:15). Jesus explains that the testimony he receives does not come from man (5:34). He then elaborates, “‘The testimony which I have is greater than that of John; for the very works that the Father has sent me to accomplish, these very works that I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me’” (5:36).⁶² Here, John reinforces and clarifies his state-

⁶⁰ C.H. Giblin notes that in the discourse which follows the sign, Jesus answers the charges of his accusers in two ways: 1) In contrast to those who desire to kill him, Jesus offers “life” instead of judgment. This is seen most clearly when one considers the chiasmic structure of the passage: A (v. 19), B (v. 20), C (vv. 21–23), D (v. 24), A’ (v. 30), B’ (vv. 28–29), C’ (vv. 26–27), D’ (v. 25). Verses 24 and 25 are the focus of this structure. Both emphasize Jesus’ offer of life. 2) In terms of a corresponding X–Y structure (X [5:19–23], Y [5:24–30]), Jesus cites his right both to give life and to judge. In X, John presents Jesus as an apprentice craftsman who learns his trade from the Father. Jesus does what his Father shows him. In Y, John drops this imagery and focuses on the authority that the Father passes on to the Son. Here John presents Jesus in terms of the formidable, eschatological figure, the Son of Man (Giblin, “Two Complementary Structures,” 96–99).

⁶¹ See Keck, “Derivation,” 275–276.

⁶² John does not attempt to negate the witness of the Baptist. He presents the

ments of 2:23–25. In those verses Jesus is said not to “trust himself to,” (or “entrust himself to”) those who believed in him based on the signs he performed. The only one to whom Jesus trusts himself, the one who alone gives the fullest testimony regarding his identity, is the Father who sent him (5:32, 37).⁶³

The statements in 2:23–25 come in the form of a reciprocal relationship. Those who saw the signs “believed in his name” (ἐπίστευσαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ), “but Jesus did not trust *himself* [emphasis mine] to them” (ἐπίστευεν αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς). Belief is essentially “trust.”⁶⁴ When one “believes,” one relinquishes a certain measure of one’s authority over oneself (one’s judgment) to another.⁶⁵ For John, that power to which one might entrust oneself flows in one direction. It proceeds from the Father alone. For Jesus to entrust himself to those who trust in his name would be for Jesus to abandon the only true source of his authority. The testimony Jesus receives is not from man (5:34). It comes from God (5:37). Jesus thoroughly transcends the ability of his hearers to judge the world. Yet, they refuse to relinquish

Baptist’s identification of Jesus as correct (1:15–18, 29), especially in that it was the result of divine direction (1:33). Rather, John wishes to stress that Jesus’ testimony comes from one source alone, a source to which he alone has access. The Baptist himself testifies that he is of the earth (3:31); accordingly, his testimony is inferior to the unique witness of the Son (3:26–30).

⁶³ In 5:31–32, John uses the same Greek adjective to express two different meanings. Jesus initiates talk regarding the validity of his witness. He states his testimony is not “true”/“valid” (ἀληθής) if it is only he who bears witness to himself. To justify himself, he produces a validating witness, his Father, whose testimony is “true” (ἀληθής). In the Jewish law, one cannot be convicted of a crime on the testimony of only one witness (cf. Dt. 19:15) (Brown, *John I–XII*, 223). John’s use of the principle does not conform strictly with any biblical reference to the law regarding witnesses. In the Mishnaic tractate *Kethuboth*, it is stated that no one may bear witness on his own behalf (Brown, *John I–XII*, 223).

Later, in Chapter 8, John again uses the same adjective with two different meanings. There, however, Jesus does not initiate the conversation regarding the validity of his testimony. He gives a revelation saying: “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” See Gerhard Lohfink, *The Bible: Now I Get It!* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979), 127–133. He declares a truth about himself. The Pharisees, however, turn what was originally a non-judicial situation into a judicial one. They state that Jesus’ testimony is not “valid” (ἀληθής) since he bears witness to himself. Jesus answers the Pharisees by stating that his testimony is “true” (ἀληθής) and gives the reason: his divine origin (8:14). See John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 176 n., 28. Both in Chapter 5 and in Chapter 8, the “truth” of Jesus’ witness stems from its origin in the Father.

⁶⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, πιστεύω, *TDNT*, vol. 6, 175, 225.

⁶⁵ Belief, therefore, entails obedience (14:15–24).

their false roles as judges of reality and thus become themselves subject to judgment (5:24b). That one relinquishes such control is what belief requires. John asks that his readers come to trust that Jesus can lead them into an unknown mode of existence to which Jesus alone has access (cf. 3:13, 31–35): eternal life.

John defines the requirements of “belief” by revealing Jesus as the one who transcends the limits of human judgment. By examining the reactions to Jesus by those who reject him, John guides his readers within the confines of human reason and human experience and leads them to that boundary where Jesus is experienced as a person who transcends the limits of mere earthly perception. There one must either reject him or react with faith. In the final narrative unit of his gospel, John will use Thomas to direct his readers towards this same boundary experience.

The Miraculous Sea-Crossing

The next narrative I shall examine focuses on Jesus as the source of his disciples’ success. As such he appears as one who must be accepted on his own terms, not earthly terms. Before examining the sea-crossing (6:16–21), I will first examine its placement within the context of the gospel. In 6:1–15, John narrates a scene in which Jesus feeds five thousand with only five loaves and two fish. The crowd’s reaction to this “sign” warrants special attention. John describes their response, “When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, ‘This is indeed the prophet who is come into the world’” (6:14).⁶⁶ This statement is consistent with John’s portrayal of the messianic expectations of Jesus’ time (cf. 1:21, 25; 7:40, 52). With the addition of 6:15, John makes it clear that the title “prophet” does not express an adequate understanding of Jesus.⁶⁷ It represents the people’s false expectations regarding their salvation.

⁶⁶ The obvious association here is to Dt. 18:15, 18. This reference to the prophet like Moses flows smoothly from 5:45–47. The Jews view their salvation in relation to the tradition of Moses. Perhaps Jesus can indeed be considered to be such a prophet. Here the misunderstanding revolves around their desire to shape him according to their own motives and make him into an earthly king.

⁶⁷ Schnackenburg notes that since the response of the crowd does not appear in the synoptic tradition, it is most likely John’s “narrative invention.” He also views the title “prophet” as a positive designation for Jesus and believes John uses it to demonstrate the positive effect of the miracle. He calls it a confession that expresses the “mystery of Jesus” (cf. 1:49; 4:42; 6:69; 11:27; 20:28). Such confessions “transcend the horizons of those who make them” (*John* II, 19).

Verse 6:15 clearly demonstrates that the crowd's response to Jesus is not one of faith. It is an exercise of earthly judgments based on earthly expectations. John presents this judgment from Jesus' point of view, stressing his unique insight into the thoughts of humans, "Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself" (6:15).

John's phrasing in this verse makes two things clear. First, the crowds intend "to take him by force" (ἀρπάζειν) and "make him king" (ποιήσωσιν βασιλέα). Clearly, they intend to impose their will on Jesus and "make" (ποιήσωσιν) him into something he is not. They intend to fashion him after their vision of the messiah.⁶⁸ Their messiah will be an earthly creation. Since they perceive in Jesus only what they wish to perceive, they cannot see the truth.

Second, Jesus, understanding their intentions, withdraws from them (6:15). Those who wish to construct their own truth lose the real truth (cf. 9:41). Jesus can only be comprehended as one who comes on his own terms, one who transcends human designations of who he should be. John juxtaposes the response of this crowd (6:14–15) with his narration of the miraculous sea crossing (6:16–21)⁶⁹ and, doing so, contrasts the response of those who see only their own truth with another sort of response, the trusting acceptance of Jesus' disciples.⁷⁰

C.H. Giblin makes several pertinent observations regarding 6:16–21. He notes that John's presentation of the miracle focuses not so much on Jesus' ability to overcome the fury of the storm but on the progress his presence allows his disciples to make in their journey.⁷¹ Their journey, according to Giblin, can be divided into two stages. The first stage (6:16–18) describes the dilemma of the disciples before

⁶⁸ Josephus notes the existence of Jewish figures leading rebellious movements who, during this era, were "proclaimed king" by their followers (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 88. See also Schnackenburg, *John* II, 19, n., 40).

⁶⁹ The order of John's presentation is most likely derived from a source. The synoptic version of this story follows the feeding of the five thousand in both Mark and Matthew (Mk.6:32–52; Mt. 14:13–33). Only John adds the response of the crowds to the miracle (6:14–15). Thus, the faithful reaction of the disciples can be contrasted to that of the crowds.

⁷⁰ Giblin, "Miraculous Crossing," 99.

⁷¹ See Giblin, "Miraculous Crossing," 97. John gives only the sparsest details regarding the storm's fury, and he makes no mention of the storm's cessation. Rather, he focuses on the completion of the disciples' journey.

Jesus had come to them. The second stage (6:19–21) encompasses their initial contact with Jesus, his self-identification (ἐγώ εἰμι) and the miraculous completion of their journey.⁷²

In the first stage, John describes the less than favorable conditions in which the disciples are making their passage. It was dark (6:17). There were strong winds and high seas (6:18). Curiously, between his reference to darkness (6:17b) and the closely conjoined (ἢ τε) reference to the wind (6:18), John describes in 6:17c the disciples' plight in relation to the coming of Jesus. He states, "It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them, and the sea rose because a strong wind was blowing." It appears then that the situation of the disciples mirrors the plight of humans when "Jesus had not yet come to them."⁷³ According to John, unless Jesus approaches humans, unless he moves proactively towards them, they are helpless.

When they had progressed some distance out to sea, "the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water and drawing near to them" (6:19). The disciples initially react with fear. But, Jesus' self-identification "'It is I'" (ἐγώ εἰμι),⁷⁴ and his statement of reassurance, "'do not be afraid'" (μὴ φοβεῖσθε), encourage his disciples to take him into the boat. "Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going" (6:21).

John gives little detail concerning the circumstances of the miracle.⁷⁵ His sparse phrasing keeps the reader's focus not on the color-

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Brown believes this "I am" to be "a borderline case where one cannot be sure if a divine formula is meant" (*John I–XII*, 252). Schnackenburg believes the opposite. He is so sure that it is a divine formula that he believes its use in this case to be the entire reason for John's inclusion of this narrative (*John I*, 27). I agree with Gibling that it is most likely a divine formula. Jesus does not bid the storm to cease. He says nothing other than "'It is I. Do not be afraid.'" The miraculous effect must therefore be connected to this self-identification. Similarly, in 18:5 ff., John connects the hapless falling backward of those who come to arrest Jesus to his self-identification "'I am.'" I also agree with Gibling, against Schnackenburg, that this statement is not the purpose of the episode ("Miraculous Crossing," 98).

⁷⁵ The parallel accounts both in Mark and in Matthew are more colorful. Both contain more details than John regarding the plight of the boat and the strange appearance of Jesus walking on the water (See Mt. 14:24–26 and Mk. 6:47–49). The scarcity of detail in this scene forces the reader to focus on the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. This effect is similar to what Erich Auerbach observes in the Old Testament story of the binding of Isaac. He states that "the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized," and thus the relationship between God and Abraham is emphasized. God commands; Abraham obeys; Abraham reacts

ful details of the miracle but on the interaction between Jesus and his disciples. They accept Jesus at his self-identification (ἐγώ εἰμι). As soon as they do, their journey comes to a speedy completion (εὐθέως ἐγένετο). The successful completion of their journey through their willingness to accept Jesus as he identifies himself is the point of this short narrative.⁷⁶

Accepting Jesus on his own terms facilitates success in discipleship.⁷⁷ The reaction of Jesus' disciples stands in sharp contrast to the reaction of those who wished to force their will upon Jesus and make him king. Jesus remains with those who accept him on his own terms and enables them to reach their goal. But from those who wished to make him king, he withdrew. Jesus' full identity can be understood only on his own terms. His signs as well are not to be interpreted in terms of human preconceptions. John makes this clear in the discourse that follows this miracle.

The Demand for a Sign

Those who follow Jesus because they witnessed the miracle of the loaves do not seek him for the correct reasons. John emphasizes this as Jesus identifies their purely earthly motivation. They seek him not because they saw signs, but because they ate their fill of the loaves (6:26). At first, these witnesses to the feeding miracle appear to respond favorably towards Jesus. They seem to believe that Jesus can relay God's will to them. They ask him, "What must we do to be doing the works of God?" (6:28). Jesus answers, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him who he has sent" (6:29). Their response, however, is inimical to the attitude of faith. They demand proof that he is sent by God. "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform?" (6:30). They ask for a sign akin to the one Moses performed in the desert (6:31).

with faith. The author does not give unnecessary details (*Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 3–24.

⁷⁶ Giblin, "Miraculous Crossing," 98–99.

⁷⁷ Giblin identifies three other scenes in the gospel in which John presents the theme of Jesus as the one who facilitates the success of his disciples. These are 4:36–38; 15:1–8, and 21:1–14 ("Miraculous Crossing," 99–100).

Most likely his hearers expect the return of “the prophet” like Moses and thus, of course, ask him to do something similar to that which Moses did in the desert (6:14).⁷⁸ They begin by asking for Jesus’ guidance, but end by demanding that he should behave as they believe he should. Again, John demonstrates that Jesus’ auditors wish Jesus to conform to their own expectations.

In answer to their request, Jesus identifies himself as the bread they seek (6:35). They need look no further. He himself is the sign. He is “‘the bread which came down from heaven’” (6:42). But Jesus’ interlocutors claim to “know” him differently from that way in which he reveals himself (6:42). His ways appear as strange and unacceptable; they contradict the false knowledge to which his hearers cling. So, they cannot trust him; they cannot believe him. As a consequence of their unbelief, they are unable to hear him (6:60).⁷⁹

With this discourse, John portrays for his readers in narrative form that which they were earlier told in the form of a saying: “‘He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and of the earth he speaks’” (3:31). John presents faith as the key to perception. Jesus’ identity is beyond human reckoning. If one wishes to keep his company, to share his eternal life, one must trust his lead; one must believe (5:24).

By couching the sea-crossing episode between the reaction to the feeding miracle and the adverse reaction to the bread of life discourse, John emphasizes that the only way to accept Jesus is on his own terms. He also reiterates the idea that these terms transcend human reason. But should one place his or her faith in someone simply because that person’s actions defy human understanding? John here presents his readers with a problem.

It is only in the light of this problem that John can begin to make clear to his readers the enormous otherness of the transcendent reality of which he speaks. Indeed, people must be led beyond the level of their selves alone before they can have faith. The faith the gospel describes comes as a result of God’s action in transcending the limits of mere human perception. In both 6:44 and 6:65, John makes this explicit. To those who do not believe Jesus says, “‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by

⁷⁸ See Brown, *John I–XII*, 265.

⁷⁹ “Many of his disciples, when they heard it [his statements regarding eating his flesh etc.], said, ‘This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?’” (τις δύναται αὐτοῦ ἀκούειν) (6:60).

the Father'" (6:65).⁸⁰ He reiterates this theme five verses later: "'Did I not choose you . . .'" (6:70). Here John emphasizes to his readers that faith comes only according to God's plan and as a result of his action. It does not come as the result of earthly, self-willed desire. Rather, faith comes as a consequence of being taught by God (6:45).

We shall see in the story of Thomas that it is the approach of Jesus, his action in which he surpasses the expectations of the unbeliever, which allows the intransigent doubter to believe.

The "Suggestion" of Jesus' Brothers and Jesus' Response

Next I shall analyze 7:1–14. This is the third of four occurrences of the suggestion, negative response, positive action pattern.⁸¹ Like the other three, it demonstrates that Jesus acts according to his own purpose, independently of human desires.⁸² The lesson for John's readers is, of course, that Jesus cannot be comprehended according to the precepts of mere worldly judgment. Rather, he must be allowed to come in his own way. Here, in this second part of the gospel where the conflict between Jesus and unbelievers comes to the fore, John uses the pattern to demonstrate explicitly that the manner in which Jesus manifests himself contradicts the expectations that the world has for its savior.

The "suggestion," in this instance, comes from Jesus' own brothers:

The feast of the Jews, Tabernacles was near. His brothers, then, said to him, 'Pass from here and go into Judea so that your disciples, too, may see the works that you are doing. For no one does anything secretly and wants to be publicly (recognized). If you do these things, manifest yourself to the world' (7:2–4).⁸³

⁸⁰ Of these two verses Schnackenburg states, "The evangelist makes use of this idea of predestination to illuminate the darkness of unbelief. . . . God's grace . . . is denied those who do not believe" (*John* II, 74). Barrett comments, "Coming to Jesus is not a matter of free human decision" (*John*, 252). Although John makes it clear that faith (and the life it brings) ultimately come only as a result of God's action, it is not necessary to hold that John is fatalistic. In this instance the failure of Jesus' auditors to believe in him is attributed to their not being called. Elsewhere in the gospel, John presents the idea that those who do not believe will ultimately see rightly in the light of Jesus' eschatological action. In Chapter 8, Jesus addresses those who will in the end be responsible for his death, "'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, you will know that I am he'" (8:28). Later, in a discourse with his disciples, Jesus states, "'When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all men to myself'" (12:32).

⁸¹ Gibling, "Suggestion," 197.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 206–209.

⁸³ As translated by Gibling ("Suggestion," 206).

John tells his readers that the suggestion of Jesus' brothers does not stem from positive motivations: "Even his brothers did not believe him." He presents the suggestion of Jesus' brothers as something of a taunt. They suppose that there is only one reason for a person to perform prodigious, supernatural acts, namely, to gain public recognition (7:4). Jesus should, therefore, go and perform before the crowds gathered at the feast in Jerusalem.⁸⁴ John's readers will remember that Jesus does not seek the glory that comes "from men" (cf. 5:41).

His brothers are said not to believe. With them as an example of unbelief, John clearly identifies a symptom of the human condition that obfuscates belief: they do not believe because Jesus does not act according to their expectations.⁸⁵ The response of Thomas in 20:25 is a manifestation of the same problem.

⁸⁴ Giblin observes, "The focus of the suggestion . . . is not just public display of miraculous acts, but self-centered manifestation" ("Suggestion," 206). Giblin notes that the suggestion of Jesus' brothers contains "three major elements: (1) the time of the feast is implied as the opportune time for Jesus' manifestation . . . (2) this kind of manifestation [is necessary] . . . (3) Jesus' success in the world's eyes entails a movement from Galilee to Judea" for, according to the human way of thinking, his "glory" will be served by such publicity ("Suggestion," 207).

⁸⁵ The interesting analysis of Diana Culbertson gives a new and useful perspective on the situation of those who do not believe. See "'Are You Also Deceived?' Reforming the Reader in John 7," *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* (1989): 148–160. Using a psychoanalytically oriented method of reader-response criticism, she notes that John proposes to bring his readers to an awareness of themselves. She believes that John presents the disbelief of Jesus' brothers as an example of a type of behavior he wishes his readers to overcome. They must learn to overcome their "infantile" tendencies towards "omnipotence" ("Reforming the Reader," 149). As do other classic literary texts, John pressures "the reader to admit human limitation; in fact, to discover the meaning and tragic beauty of humanity precisely in limitation" ("Reforming the Reader," 149).

Her approach regarding the reader's relation to characters in the gospel differs significantly from that of another "psycho-literary" critic, Michael Newhart. See "Toward a Psycho-literary Reading of the Fourth Gospel" in *What is John? Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. Segovia (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1996), 43–58. Culbertson believes that John presents characters who do not believe, such as Jesus' brothers, in order that the reader might recognize something of him or herself within them and then learn to overcome the fundamental weakness (the desire to control) he or she shares with these characters. As do Culpepper and Staley, Newhart sees the characters as types whom John coerces his readers to either emulate or reject. Newhart states that the reader projects his or her desires for union with God onto the disciples and thus "learns to believe through them" while feeling alienated from Jesus' opponents ("Psycho-literary Reading," 54). Culbertson's analysis is closer to my own. She sees that those characters who oppose Jesus represent, not villainous types whose monstrous behavior repels the reader, but examples of common modes of human reaction to Jesus as he transcends their expectations. The reader must "reform" his or her desire to "control," according to his or her own

Jesus' negative response comes in 7:6–9:

Jesus said to them: 'My opportune time is not yet present; your opportune time is always at hand. The world is not able to hate you; me, though, it does hate, because I bear witness concerning it that its works are evil. You go up to [for] the feast! I am not going up to [for] *this* feast [emphasis mine], because my opportune time has not yet been fulfilled.'

Jesus clearly disassociates himself from the expectations of his brothers and, in so doing, clarifies the distinction between his way and the way of the world.⁸⁶ As it had at the wedding in Cana, Jesus' concern centers on the time of his revelation (cf. 2:4). He replies to their suggestion, "'My opportune time is not yet present; your opportune time is always at hand'" (7:6). He not only emphasizes that his time has not yet arrived but also that his "time" is quite different from theirs. "The time and place of [Jesus'] actions are determined by an anti-this-worldly viewpoint."⁸⁷ In addition to revealing that Jesus' concerns transcend those of his brothers, John reminds his readers that Jesus' ultimate concern is his eschatological, revelatory moment, his "time" (καιρός).⁸⁸ John turns his readers' attention forward to that time in the narrative when Jesus' "hour" will be fully present. Jesus' full identity will be confessed for the first time only after his glorification, his crucifixion and resurrection (20:28b).⁸⁹

Jesus' positive action comes when he does go up to the feast. He does not, however, go up *for* it but arrives in the *middle* of the feast. Moreover, he does not do so in the manner suggested by his brothers. He goes up in secret, avoiding the public fanfare that his brothers

world-view, the encounter with the Divine ("Reforming the Reader," 153–157). This reformation follows God's action of reaching out to his creation.

⁸⁶ In this passage, John, for the first time, displays the sharp division that exists between Jesus and "the world" (ὁ κόσμος) (7:4, 7). John will develop this theme more fully in Part Three. There, John makes clear that the world's animosity towards Jesus will be extended towards his disciples as well (15:18–16:4) (Giblin, "Suggestion," 207).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Beasley-Murray states that Jesus' "time" (καιρός) and his "hour" (ώρα) refer to the same event (*John*, 107). There is, however, a differentiation in the sense of the two terms. Jesus hour (ώρα) is the time for his glorification (his going to his Father) and is anticipated, in a genuine sense, in his signs and the corresponding faith of his disciples. His opportune time (καιρός) represents the season *he himself* will pick for the fulfillment of his word. The synthesis of the Father's action and Jesus' own will is seen in texts such as 10:17–18 and 12:23–28.

⁸⁹ See Koester, *Symbolism*, 30, 46, 177, 211.

had suggested he should strive to attract (7:10). At the feast, he performs no miracle at all. Rather, he goes up to teach (7:14).⁹⁰ Again, the pattern suggests that Jesus does not act in order to fulfill the earthly expectations of those he encounters during his ministry. Rather, he acts according to his own plan, a plan that confounded his brothers. John offers this episode as an illustration of another manner in which Jesus' ways transcend human ways. He continues to elaborate on this theme with the dialogue that transpires between Jesus and those he encounters at the feast.

The Feast of Tabernacles

Jesus' teaching at this feast gives rise to the same controversy over his identity that has proven to be the focus of this the second of the three narrative parts of John's gospel. The controversy, as in Chapter Six, revolves around whether or not Jesus fulfills the Jewish expectations of who the messiah will be.

John vividly portrays the Jewish messianic expectations against which Jesus' hearers judge him. Some doubt Jesus because they know his place of origin. They state, "We know where this man comes from; and, when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from" (7:27). Others seem to indicate that they should know from whence the Messiah comes but argue that this one does not come from the correct place, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" (7:41–42). Others believe in him, saying, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?" (7:31). Still others, hearing his words say, "This is really the prophet," (7:40) and "This is the Christ" (7:41). John summarizes the situation: "There was a division among the people over him" (7:43). With this verse, John highlights the result of worldly reason's attempt to reach the truth about Jesus: division, not consensus.

John has already informed his readers that the controversy over Jesus' identity cannot be solved by public debate. This understanding comes solely as a result of divine action (6:65). It entails participation in a new sort of life (6:53) and supersedes the understanding of "the world." Later, in the third part of the gospel, John will elab-

⁹⁰ Ibid., 208.

orate on the idea that those who do come to believe, as a result of this divine action, participate in an extra-worldly existence (cf. 15:18–19; 17:6–9, 14).⁹¹ It is only from within this new sphere of life that Jesus can be understood.

With this third example of the pattern outlined by Giblin, and the discourse that follows (7:15–52), John further clarifies for his readers the identity of Jesus as he appears from a this-worldly perspective. Even his own brothers do not understand him. They are in a league with “the world” (7:7), and the arena in which Jesus operates is beyond the judgment of the world.⁹² In the Thomas episode, John will again emphasize the inability of those who rely on worldly reason to attain the truth regarding Jesus’ identity. Thomas, one of Jesus’ own disciples, cannot accept the idea of the resurrection, and only the action of Jesus overcomes his doubt.

Their Father Is Not Jesus’ Father

In chapter 8, the dispute over Jesus’ identity continues.⁹³ Jesus tells his hearers, “‘I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (8:12). At this point in the narrative, John’s readers are able to recognize the response of Jesus’ auditors to his offer as typical of those who judge by the standards of the world. “The Pharisees then said to him, ‘You are bearing witness to yourself; your testimony is not true’” (8:13). The worldly preconceptions of the Pharisees prevent them from seeing the truth of Jesus’ identity.

Jesus identifies the problem that limits their ability to perceive the truth. They “‘judge according to the flesh’” [κατὰ τὴν σάρκα] (8:15a).

⁹¹ Ibid., 248.

⁹² Giblin, “Suggestion,” 208.

⁹³ Most ancient textual authorities omit 7:58–8:12. It almost certainly is not part of John’s original text. Of this later addition, Metzger states, “It is obviously a piece of oral tradition which circulated in certain parts of the Western church and which was subsequently incorporated into various manuscripts at various places. Most copyists apparently thought that it would interrupt John’s narrative least if it were inserted after 7:52” (Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 188). In the context of the gospel as a whole, the text does not detract from John’s argument. In this position, it serves as an intra-textual commentary on those verses it precedes. With this addition, the redactor presents the idea that this group in Jerusalem has no right to judge anyone. They are sinners. The dialogue that follows emphasizes both these points (cf. 8:15, 34). Against the background of their sinfulness, John presents Jesus as the sole option by which they might escape this state.

They should instead do as Jesus does and “judge no one” (8:15b). Jesus adds that, if he does judge, his judgment would not be of the flesh but of the will of the Father (8:16). Their mode of judgment indicates that sphere in which they exist. They operate in the way “of the flesh” (cf. 1:13; 3:6; 6:63). John goes on to emphasize that their place of origin (their “of-ness” as Keck puts it)⁹⁴ excludes them from the understanding shared by those who participate in Jesus’ mode of living, the “life” in which only believers can share. “He said to them, ‘You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am He’” (8:23–24).⁹⁵

Although John states that many believed in Jesus’ words (8:30), he soon makes it clear that their belief is inadequate since it is based on worldly judgments. Jesus tells this group, “‘If you continue in my word you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free’” (8:31b–32). They state that they are “‘descendants of Abraham and have never been in bondage to anyone’” (8:33a). They resist Jesus when his words appear to contradict their own self-understanding. Their misconstrued, self-willed standpoint prevents them from responding with trust to accept Jesus’ statement (8:33b).

Jesus, however, identifies their slavery as a slavery to sin and points to their murderous intent towards him as evidence of their state (8:35–37). He finally connects their inability to believe him to their mode of being. They are “of” [ἐκ] their father “the devil” (8:44). As such, they operate only within the sphere of their father, “the father of lies” (8:44). They know only “lies” and have no access to the truth. Jesus tells them, “‘He who is of [ἐκ] God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God’” (8:47).

John indicates that way by which this worldly blindness will be turned into sight. In 8:28, Jesus states, “‘When you have lifted up

⁹⁴ Keck, “Derivation,” 280.

⁹⁵ The “I am” (ἐγώ εἰμι) in this instance is almost certainly an Old Testament revelation formula (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 131). Also see note below. Here the saying carries a salvific significance. See David Mark Ball, *I Am in John’s Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 282–283. He notes that Jesus comes not to judge the world but to save it [3:17; 12:47] (*I Am in John’s Gospel*, 282).

the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak as the Father taught me.” Jesus here speaks of a change he will effect in humans when he fulfills his eschatological purpose.⁹⁶ Notably, over the course of the entire gospel, no character will voice a recognition of Jesus in such explicitly divine terms, except Thomas, whose unbelief the reader will see “changed” into belief at the sight of the risen Lord (cf. 20:28).

That the transformation from unbelief to the sort of belief that engenders “life” can come only in the light of Jesus final glorification is no surprise to John’s readers. He has already informed them that

⁹⁶ Jesus’ statement “I am” (ἐγώ εἰμι), in this instance, is most probably an allusion to the divine name as it appears in Is. 43:10. See C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 94, 168–169. It may perhaps be better to translate the statement “know that I am” in an absolute sense. For their immediate response is, “You, who are you?” and may suggest that Jesus’ audience was left awaiting the completion of the thought. Furthermore, the controversy closes with the climactic statement in 8:58, “Before Abraham was, I am.”

Some question exists as to whether this event will be a positive or a negative one for Jesus’ hearers in Jerusalem. Bultmann holds that it is an event of final judgment against those who do “lift up” Jesus. They will be condemned as they face the truth of Jesus (*John*, 348–349). Others such as Koester, Thüsing, and Matera, see it as the sort of event John describes in 5:29, where some are condemned and some receive life. For a summary of these opinions, see Koester, *Symbolism*, 211. Schnackenburg allows that John leaves the verse open. For those who respond to the truth with faith, it will mean salvation. For those who remain obdurate in the face of truth, it will mean condemnation (*John II*, 203). There is no easy solution as to whether John may here imply judgment, salvation or a combination of the two. On the one hand, those who do not believe need no further judgment since they are already judged (3:18); on the other, John allows for a future judgment (5:29). If the theme is a future judgment, it is an anomaly. According to John, recognition of Jesus’ identity leads to salvation. The only exception to this principle appears to be 5:29 where some of those who “hear his voice” are condemned.

There may be a possibility of judgment in this verse; however, the verse points to an event of transformative salvation as well. It stands in the same line with the formula found in Ez. 16:62–63. Here judgment and salvation are combined in one event: “For I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord, that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of you shame, when I forgive you all that you have done. . . .” For those who, after lifting him up, come to know Jesus’ identity as the Son, the event would surely contain a revelation of self-knowledge. The knowledge of their guilt would be revealed to them simultaneously with the knowledge of their salvation. With these verses John does not focus so much on the fates of humans as on the transformative power of Jesus’ being lifted up. It appears that John combines the Isaian designation for God’s name (Is. 43:10 LXX) with that of Ez 16:62–63. As the experience of the exile brought the shame of punishment upon Israel (Ez. 16:59) so too did that experience purify them. Similarly the shame of seeing Christ lifted up brings triumph through tragedy.

it is necessary for Jesus to be glorified, “lifted up,” through his cross and resurrection in order to allow believers to participate in the eternal life he has to offer. In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus states, “‘The Son of man *must be* lifted up [emphasis mine], that whoever believes in him may have eternal life’” (3:14).⁹⁷ In the same chapter, John makes two things clear: First, everlasting life in the Spirit is only available to those who believe (3:14, 16, 18) and, second, this new life necessarily entails a complete reconstitution of all those who participate in it (3:3, 5). In 7:37–39, John reemphasizes that this new life in the Spirit can be offered to believers only *after* Jesus has been glorified (“As yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus has not yet been glorified” [7:39b]).⁹⁸

John (with 8:28) therefore offers hope that the “of-ness” of Jesus’ interlocutors in Chapter Eight can be changed. John’s readers are already well aware that a change in one’s state of being is required for one to share in the new life that Jesus offers (3:5). This change can take place only at the behest of the Father (6:65) and entails a faith response to Jesus as he identifies himself as God’s son. At this point in the narrative John’s readers have been made ready to understand the sort of “change” Thomas must undergo in order to believe. They also understand that this change necessarily entails an encounter with the risen Son of God, Jesus, and that such an encounter comes, without exception, as a result of Jesus’ action.

As he narrates the risen Jesus’ encounter with Thomas, John will clearly illustrate such a change. In this instance, the reader will see Jesus, not only as the object of Thomas’ faith, but also as the one who acts to arouse his faith. He does this in accord with his Father’s

⁹⁷ “ὁψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου” (3:14).

⁹⁸ Udo Schnelle notes that John does not intend to divorce the concept of “glory” from the miracles Jesus performs while he exists in human flesh. The miracles have indeed manifested Jesus’ glory. Rather, John refers to the soteriological significance that Jesus’ final exultation holds for his disciples. As yet, they do not know the full truth. Only after Jesus is risen, and the disciples receive the gift of the Spirit, will they understand the full significance of Jesus’ coming (cf. 12:16). (*Antidoketische Christologie im Johannesevangelium* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987], 182). Dodd also insists that Jesus’ signs are manifestations of his glory. He adds that there is no transfiguration scene in John, since in this gospel Jesus manifests his glory throughout (*Interpretation*, 207–208). Thus, it is the perceptive ability of those who see Jesus that will be altered. Indeed, after the resurrection, the disciples will be, in some manner, changed. This change can only be associated with Jesus’ initiative (cf. 8:28).

will and in fulfillment of his own words (3:14–15). Through his act, through his showing himself risen to the unbeliever, Jesus enables Thomas to overcome his worldly perspective through the response of faith.

Jesus' Opponents Are not of His Sheep

This second part of the gospel's tripartite narrative structure ends as it began with Jesus in the midst of a controversy over his identity. Jesus is again in Jerusalem, at the feast of the Dedication, when the Jews ask him bluntly, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (10:24).⁹⁹ Jesus answers, "I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me" (10:25). Here, John's readers hear reiterated what they learned in the opening chapter of the gospel's second part. Jesus' works bear witness to the fact that he is sent by the Father (5:36). But here, as earlier, the Jews fail to comprehend that they have witnessed the revelation of God's glory.

Jesus explains to his questioners that their failure to believe results from their mode of existence. He tells them, "You do not believe because you are not of my sheep" (οὐκ ἐστέ ἐκ τῶν προβάτων τῶν ἐμῶν) (10:26). They therefore have no access to the truth. For only Jesus' sheep are those who pass through the "sheep gate" (10:7–10).¹⁰⁰ John reinforces for his readers the idea that it is only by the will (and action) of the Father that one might enter into the new state of being that leads to life (10:29; cf. 6:37, 44).

Because they are not of Jesus' sheep, the members of this group judge Jesus by earthly standards. They have expectations of how the

⁹⁹ Neyrey argues that John here presents a forensic proceeding. He states that, as in 5:31–46 and 3:6–12, Jesus turns a judgment levied upon him by his accusers into a judgment against his accusers. In 10:24, their question represents an accusation, not an earnest inquiry into whether Jesus might be the Christ. In 10:25–27, Jesus explains that they do not perceive that he does the Father's work because they are not chosen to do so (Jerome H. Neyrey, "I Said You Are Gods": Psalm 82:6 and John 10," *JBL* 108/4 [1989]: 650–651).

¹⁰⁰ Only those who pass through this gate have access to the Father. Giblin notes that this is the second example of John's presenting Jesus, himself, as the sole conduit by which humans might pass into life with the Father. The first comes in Part One of the gospel (cf. 1:51). The last comes in Part Three; where, "in response to Thomas on the eve of his passion, Jesus reveals himself as the (sole) way, both truth and life, without which no one can reach the Father (14:5–6) ('Tripartite,' 465).

messiah should act as based on their interpretation of the Jewish tradition (cf. 7:27, 42). Their false understanding blocks their view of Jesus' glory. They cannot accept the revelation of God's son in human form. They believe Jesus "makes" himself God (10:34). So, when Jesus concludes his monologue concerning his role as shepherd with the statement, "I and the Father are one" (10:30), his opponents prepare to stone him (10:31).

Replying to their accusation, Jesus counters, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?" (10:32). They reply, "We do not stone you for a good work but for blasphemy. Because you, being a man, make yourself God" (10:33). Jesus then uses the scriptures to demonstrate that their charge of blasphemy is false. Jesus answers, "Is it not written in your law: 'I said you are gods?'" If he called them gods to whom the word of God came . . . , do you say of him who the Father consecrated and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming," because I said, "I am the Son of God?" (10:34–36).¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Neyrey argues that John places Psalm 82:6 on the lips of Jesus in order that his readers might understand it in a manner similar to the sort of interpretation found in Jewish Midrash ("I Said You Are Gods," 654–663). John does so in order to argue against the false accusation that Jesus *makes* himself God (10:33). He uses the Psalm to demonstrate that it is God who designates Jesus as God. His basic argument flows from a midrashic understanding that the Psalm verse is addressed to the Jews as they receive the law at Sinai. This event represents a new creation ("I Said You Are Gods," 658). When they receive the law they are made just and are no longer susceptible to the punishment of death. Psalm verses 82:6–7 read, "I say, 'You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like men, and fall like any prince.'" The rabbis attribute the fall to the worship of the calf ("I Said You Are Gods," 657–658). Prior to their sin they were deathless and as gods. After their sin they lose this status ("I Said You Are Gods," 657; cf. *Num. Rab.* 16:24). Their short-lived deathlessness had been associated with obedience and holiness. Neyrey believes John uses the Psalm verse in a manner similar to the midrash in order to justify Jesus in this forensic proceeding. John draws from the basic midrashic idea that the verse alludes to the temporary status of the Jews as gods at Sinai. Neyrey points to the phrase "to whom the word of God came" (10:35) to substantiate his claim. He believes the phrase is an allusion to the Sinai experience since it is there that Moses received the law ("I Said You Are Gods," 662). As he made the Jews gods at Sinai, God makes Jesus Son of God. Jesus does not make himself God. His power over death (5:21–29; 10:17–18) correlates to the short-lived deathlessness of the Jews at Sinai. Jesus, however, remains sinless and retains his status as God's son. Jesus is thus innocent of the charge that he made himself God ("I Said You Are Gods," 661–663).

Neyrey does not adequately address John's rhetorical style in these verses. In 10:26, Jesus refers to himself as the one whom the Father "consecrated and sent into the world." In 10:25 he refers to the Jews to whom the word (λόγος) came.

He answers their charge by asserting that it is only God who can designate him as God's son. He does not make himself God; God does. As evidence that he is God's son he produces his works: "If I do not do my Father's works, do not believe me. If, however, I do, even though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand that I am in the Father and the Father in me" (10:37–38). They reply by again attempting to arrest him (10:39). Jesus turns the table on his accusers. They do not perceive that his good works are from God. Nor do they perceive that his status as God's son is the result of God's action. Their failure to perceive excludes them from his flock (10:26–27). They are not among those given Jesus by the Father and are as such incapable of belief (cf. 10:25; 8:47). Rather than recognize Jesus as their savior, they persist in persecuting him (10:39; cf. 8:43–44).

In their eyes Jesus is a blasphemer and thus could not be the messiah, regardless of the signs that he performs. The members of this group exhibit a tendency to try and control the revelation of the truth (cf. 7:3–5). If it moves beyond the parameters of their false expectations, they reject it. Thus they are blinded by their own supposed knowledge (cf. 9:41).¹⁰² They fail to recognize in Jesus' works the life-giving power that only God possesses (10:28).

In the next chapter, Jesus' enemies will continue to misunderstand him (11:46–53) even when he demonstrates his power over death by raising Lazarus (11:25, 43–44). In the same chapter, John will demonstrate that even Thomas, one of Jesus' loyal disciples, cannot fully comprehend the significance of his power over death (11:16). Ultimately, with the sign he becomes through his defeat of death,¹⁰³ Jesus will enable Thomas to recognize fully his relation to the Father (20:28).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have again emphasized that John presents Jesus in terms of his relationships to those characters he meets over the course of the narrative. This experience involves more than what one can

It appears that Jesus is making a logical argument based on his own identity as the λόγος, whom God sent into the world. If those who received the λόγος can be called gods, then surely the λόγος himself can be called Son of God.

¹⁰² So long as they think they can see, they miss the "truth."

¹⁰³ See Giblin, "Tripartite," 449, 462–463.

attain by mere human endeavor. It is only through God's will that Jesus' true identity as God's son is revealed. Those who receive this experience therefore do not control it. The passages we examined in Part Two of the gospel illustrate this well. The very community that awaits the messiah, because of their preconceptions concerning the way the messiah should behave (5:10–12, 18, 44; 6:14–15, 30–31, 41–42; 7:4, 27, 41–42; 8:13; 10:30–31), rejects him when he comes.

John has made it clear that they reject Jesus because they judge according to worldly standards while Jesus is revealed according to heavenly standards (7:7; 8:23, 37–38, 44, 47; 10:27). Jesus, because of his unique status as God's son, has a unique knowledge of the Father (5:17–19, 21; 8:15–16, 23; 10:30) to which the other characters in the gospel do not have access, except through faith in Jesus' witness. Participation in the everlasting life which faith engenders comes only through will of the Father (6:44) as communicated by the Son (6:55, 70).

In Part Two of his gospel, John has repeated the following themes that he introduced in Part One. He again presented, in narrative form, Jesus' supernatural insight into the thoughts of humans (5:6), his role as facilitator of his disciple's success (6:16–21), and the self-determined nature of Jesus' actions (5:7–8; 7:1–14). As in Part One, John refers his readers to an event yet to come in the narrative, the fulfillment of Jesus' "hour" (6:44; 7:6, 39; 8:28). In referring to the moment of Jesus' glorification, John reinforces for his readers the idea that this event has a salvific significance for those who come to believe in Jesus.

The reader will see each of these themes converge as John narrates the risen Lord's encounter with Thomas. There, Jesus, by his own action and according to his own purpose, will bring Thomas to the needed act of faith.

CHAPTER SIX

ENABLER OF FAITH (JESUS AND THOMAS: THE GOSPEL'S CLIMAX)

Introduction

In this chapter I shall continue to examine how John prepares his readers to understand the gospel's climactic scene (20:24–29) and then turn to a reading of the scene itself. Our analysis in this chapter concerns the last of the gospel's three narrative parts (11:1–20:29),¹ the gospel's conclusion (20:30–31), and the gospel's epilogue (21:1–25). I will examine the encounter between Jesus and Thomas (20:24–29) in the context of John's other resurrection narratives (20:1–29) and, on a broader scale, in the context of the themes I have traced throughout the gospel. John presents the encounter between Jesus and Thomas, not primarily in order to comment on the way by which Thomas comes to faith, but rather in order to identify Jesus both as the object of Thomas' faith and as the one who initiates Thomas' movement towards faith.

Jesus transcends the world-bound perceptive abilities of the unbeliever and brings him to faith (20:26–27). He does so by his own deliberate actions and according to his own plan. In the encounter with Thomas, John allows the reader to perceive Jesus in terms of his relationship to the unbeliever, whose lack of faith results from the manner in which he assesses his experiences. Thomas thinks in accord with worldly reason (cf. 11:16; 14:5). Against the backdrop of Thomas' worldly perspective, John presents the risen Jesus who transcends Thomas' worldly point of view and comes to him as the person he had known but did not fully understand (cf. 11:16; 14:5; 20:20, 25, 27) but who is now risen, now Thomas' "Lord" and his "God" (20:28).

¹ See Giblin, "Tripartite," 455–467.

Part Three in the Tripartite Narrative Structure

Thematically there are two principal ways by which the gospel's third section is distinguished from the first two. First, early in Part Three, the lines of separation between Jesus and his adversaries are clearly and permanently drawn (11:47–53).² Second, in this third section, John emphasizes the unique relationship that Jesus shares with his disciples.³ The reader, who at this stage in the narrative knows that Jesus enables the success of his disciples (cf. 4:36–38; 6:16–21),⁴ will now clearly see Jesus' plans for enabling this success (cf. 14:25–26, 29; 15:26; 16:7, 12, 25; 17:6). Thomas, as one of Jesus' disciples, must be understood within the context of this plan.

The Context in which John Introduces Thomas

The reader meets Thomas for the first time in the opening scene of Part Three, the raising of Lazarus (11:1–44). In this passage, John stresses Jesus' intent to reveal his Father's glory specifically for the benefit of his disciples. He also stresses Jesus' role as the source of life for his disciples. Understanding that John introduces Thomas in this context will prove crucial to our understanding of Thomas' relationship to Jesus.

Location in Narrative

John situates the raising of Lazarus directly after the scene in which Jesus identifies himself as the "good shepherd" who lays down his life for his sheep (10:15). In his role as the good shepherd, Jesus functions in a specific relationship with his disciples. Jesus is the shepherd; they are the sheep. Of this relationship, Jesus says:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one (10:27–30).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 459. Jesus refers to his disciples as his "friends" for the first time in this part (15:14).

⁴ Giblin, "Miraculous Crossing," 99–100. John will reinforce this theme for a third time in 15:1–8.

Through his narration of the raising of Lazarus, John elaborates for his readers two aspects of the good shepherd theme. First, Jesus reveals his plan to embark on the journey that will lead to that moment in which he lays down his life (11:7–11; cf. 10:15).⁵ Second, Jesus reveals that, as he heads towards this sacrifice, his action is ultimately for the benefit of his disciples (11:15). Within this context, John introduces his readers to Thomas as one who is willing to follow Jesus (as the sheep “follow” the shepherd cf. 10:4) but who neither perceives his true purpose (11:16) nor fully comprehends his true identity (cf. 20:31).⁶

Through the narrative structure of this passage (suggestion, negative response, and positive action),⁷ John accentuates Jesus’ true purpose in performing this sign. His purpose is to reveal God’s glory and inculcate faith in his disciples. He ultimately acts in order to change the perspective of those whose understanding of his identity is not complete. In the encounter with Thomas, the reader will see Jesus act according to the same purpose.

The Suggestion Negative Response Pattern

The raising of Lazarus is the fourth and final occurrence of the pattern, “suggestion, negative response and positive action.”⁸ As in the first three instances of the pattern, the basic message it transmits is that Jesus acts, not according to human concerns, but according to his own will.⁹ In this instance, John specifically connects Jesus’ will to the culmination of his “hour,” his death and resurrection. John also emphasizes that Jesus’ purpose in his hour is to reveal God’s glory in order that he might inculcate faith in his disciples and give them life.

The “suggestion,” in this instance, comes from the sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. They send word to Jesus, “saying, ‘Lord, he whom you love is ill’” (11:3). By referring to Lazarus as “he whom you love” (ὃν φιλεῖς), they mean to appeal to Jesus’ relationship to

⁵ Culpepper identifies 10:15, 17–18 as a prolepsis that draws the reader’s attention to the events that will soon follow (*Anatomy*, 63).

⁶ Jesus’ final journey results in “life” not “death” (cf. 20:1–29).

⁷ Giblin, “Suggestion,” 208–210.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 210–211.

Lazarus.¹⁰ They wish to motivate Jesus to come because of his special friendship.

With his negative response, Jesus separates his own concern from that of the sisters. His response is divided into two parts.¹¹ First, he prophetically proclaims that the illness “is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it” (11:4; cf. 9:3).¹² Second, he delays his movement to Judea. John’s phrasing makes it clear that this delay is both deliberate and ultimately for the benefit of Lazarus and his sisters. John tells the reader, “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was” (11:5–6). Jesus’ “negative response,” remaining where he was (11:5), outwardly appears to contradict his feelings for Lazarus and his sisters. He does not go to help his friend.¹³

Jesus’ positive reaction comes in verse seven. Giblin notes that John draws his reader’s attention to the transition from negative response to positive action by introducing the positive action with the transitional “after this” (μετὰ τοῦτο). John writes, “After this [deliberate delay of two days], he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go into Judea again’” (11:7).¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid., 208–209. Regarding Jesus’ love for Lazarus, Brown guesses that “John takes what may be a true reminiscence and uses it with theological purpose; for Lazarus, the one whom Jesus loves, is probably being held up as the representative of all those whom Jesus loves, namely the Christians” (*John* I–XII, 431). Brown’s reading does not do justice to the dynamic nature of John’s presentation. John emphasizes that Jesus operates on a different level from those who supplicate him. Mary and Martha appeal to Jesus’ feelings of friendship towards Lazarus in order to convince him to help. Although he loves Lazarus, Jesus does not heal him because of this friendship. Jesus’ purpose is to demonstrate God’s glory (11:4).

¹¹ Giblin, “Suggestion,” 209.

¹² Beasley-Murray notes that “the end of the story of Lazarus is the death of Jesus himself.” He refers to the definitive action the Sanhedrin takes as a result of Jesus’ raising of Lazarus. See 11:46–53. Thus, this narrative that contains a *sign* which points to Jesus’ glory also leads directly to, and thus is a part of, Jesus’ ultimate glorification (*John*, 187).

¹³ Verse six contains an unusual usage of the Greek μέν without a following δέ. Although such usage is well attested in classical Greek and is found elsewhere in the NT (*BDF*, no. 447, 3), it is unique to John. Giblin observes that the preceding verse (11:5) contains a δέ and postulates that, at some level in the gospel’s composition, verses five and six were reversed. As such they *could* have indicated that Jesus remained where he was for two days, but “because of his love” for the family in Bethany, he went to Judea to heal Lazarus. As the narrative presently stands it neither devalues Jesus’ love for this family, nor does it indicate that his concern was for anything but the revelation of God’s glory (“Suggestion,” 109).

¹⁴ Giblin notes that the positive action takes place in three distinct stages. They

Jesus' disciples, however, attempt to discourage his intended action. They do not understand (as John's readers do understand) that this trip to Jerusalem will result in the exposition of Jesus' glory (11:4). Rather, they assess the situation according to earthly terms. They implore, "'Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone you, and you are going there again?'" (11:8; cf. 8:59).¹⁵ Jesus attempts to explain why he must go, "'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him . . .'" (11:11). The answer given by his disciples reflects an earthly sort of reasoning that does not penetrate into the heavenly concerns of Jesus. They persist in their attempt to discourage Jesus from embarking on this journey to Judea. "'Lord if he has fallen asleep, he will recover'" (11:12). John emphasizes that Jesus' speech is on another plane than that of his disciples. He tells his readers, "'Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought he meant taking rest in sleep'" (11:13).

Finally, Jesus must tell his disciples plainly that Lazarus has died, stating, "'Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad that I was not there so that you might believe'" (11:14a-15). He insists, however, that he is "glad" he was not there to save his friend. The death of Lazarus becomes an occasion for Jesus to build the faith of his disciples. After he arrives in Judea, Jesus' conversation with Martha (11:25-27) and his prayer to the Father (11:42) make it clear that friendship is not the motivation of his actions. He acts in order that he might reveal God's glory and in order that he might evoke a faith response.¹⁶

The Relationship of 11:1-44 to Jesus' Hour

In this final occurrence of the suggestion, negative response pattern, John twice turns his reader's attention to an event in his narrative's future: Jesus' ultimate glorification. He thus closely connects the sign Jesus performs in raising Lazarus to the culmination of Jesus' hour. The first reference to this event comes in Thomas' statement, "'Let

are 11:7-16 (Giblin notes that these verses are bracketed by the first person plural subjunctive of "to go" [ἄγωμεν] in 11:7b, 15b and 16b), 11:17-37, and 11:38-44 ("Suggestion," 208-210).

¹⁵ Jesus' response in 11:9-10 is reminiscent of 9:4-5. John's readers will here realize that Jesus, as the light of the world, has but one function, to reveal the glory of the Father (9:3; 11:4).

¹⁶ Giblin, "Suggestion," 210.

us also go that we may die with him” (11:16). With this verse John alludes to the death Jesus will suffer in Jerusalem.¹⁷ The second reference comes in Jesus’ statement to Martha in 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life.”¹⁸ With both references, John links Jesus’ intent to reveal his Father’s glory to his final movement towards Jerusalem and his ultimate glorification.¹⁹

¹⁷ Schnelle sees verse 16 as redactional and believes John inserts it in order to direct the reader’s attention to Jesus’ passion (*Antidoketische*, 145). Koester states that Thomas’ words remind the reader “that the glory manifested by the sign would come only through Jesus’ real and certain encounter with death” (*Symbolism*, 107).

¹⁸ This verse has a textual variant. Several texts omit “and the life” (καὶ ἡ ζωὴ). Metzger, considering the “age, weight and diversification of witnesses,” concludes that the phrase is authentic. He suspects that the omission may have been carried out in order to balance 11:25 with 11:24, which mentions only the resurrection (*A Textual Commentary*, 199). Schnackenburg notes that the “I am” (ἐγώ εἰμι) in this verse carries an “authoritative ring” due to its contextual association with the resurrection. Jesus here lays claim to a power that God alone possesses (5:21, 26). Schnackenburg believes that, in this verse, John thinks on two levels. On one level he attends to the situation at hand (Lazarus); on another, he points ahead to Jesus’ ultimate glorification and the life in which all believers will participate (*John* II, 330–331). Bultmann sees Jesus’ statement in verse 25 as a corrective to the popular conception of an eschatological resurrection as expressed by Martha (11:24). The immediate raising of Lazarus becomes a symbol for the resurrected life believers experience in the here and now. For Bultmann, life through faith is the focus of this verse. It is not meant to point ahead to Jesus’ resurrection (see Bultmann, *John*, 402–404). Sandra Schneiders expresses a similar view: “Jesus says in 11:25, ‘I am the resurrection’ rather than I am the resurrected one or the one who will rise, he describes the role of his glorification in the life of believers . . . rather than something which occurred in his own life” (“John 20:11–18: The Encounter of the Easter Jesus with Mary Magdalene—A Transformative Feminist Reading” in *What is John? Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Fernando Segovia [Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1996], 156). In the current context (cf. 11:16), however, it appears that there must be some reference to Jesus’ own resurrection. One cannot discount that his resurrection forms the climax of the gospel (see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 190–191).

¹⁹ At this stage in the narrative, it is unlikely that Martha’s confession reflects a full understanding of Jesus’ divine nature (“I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one coming into the world”). Bultmann refers to hers as “the genuine attitude of faith.” He remarks that “she can recognize that in Jesus the eschatological invasion of God into the world has come to pass” (*John*, 404). Beasley-Murray states that Martha’s words are “a fully fledged confession of faith in Jesus” (*John*, 192). Although Martha’s words are commendable, they do not reflect the understanding of Jesus that John intends for his readers (cf. 20:31). It is unlikely that John intends Martha’s words to reflect a knowledge that Jesus is the ground of her own life. Schnackenburg states that her “yes” does not demonstrate that she “understands the meaning of his words” (*John* II, 332). Her confession does not indicate an understanding that outstretches the Jewish understanding of their expected messiah (cf. 1:49; 6:14). The full realization of Jesus’ glory cannot be had outside of the context of his “hour,” his death and resurrection (cf. 3:14; 8:28). (See Giblin,

In calling himself “the resurrection” (11:25) Jesus identifies himself, not simply as the one who will raise Martha’s brother or as the one who himself will be raised, but as the source of life (cf. 1:4; 5:24, 26). In the context of this passage (in which the future event of Jesus’ death comes to the fore) John stresses that Jesus’ glorification is a significant event for believers. Their fate, too, is bound up in Jesus’ final hour. John will clearly demonstrate this through the experience of Thomas in Chapter 20.

John’s Characterization of Thomas

Thomas’ reaction to the news of the resurrection can only be understood when it is considered in light of his characterization throughout the gospel. In the two instances in which Thomas appears before 20:24–29, John consistently portrays him as one who judges his relationship to Jesus from an earth-bound point of view.

Thomas in 11:16

Thomas first appears in the gospel at 11:16. John introduces him as follows: “Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him’” (11:16).²⁰ John portrays Thomas as one who is loyal to Jesus, one who is ready to follow him (cf. 10:27), but one who does not fully understand him. Thomas’ statement in 11:16 clearly indicates that he sees the proposed journey to Judea in a completely different light from that in which Jesus sees it.

Jesus clearly sees the journey as a way to glorify God (11:4) and to bring faith to his disciples (11:15). Thomas, on the other hand,

“Tripartite,” 462, n. 29; de Jonge, “Signs and Works,” 109, 113). John’s allusions to this future event in the narrative indicate as much.

²⁰ John’s reference to Thomas as “the Twin” (Θωμᾶς ὁ λεγόμενος Δίδυμος) serves no special purpose in the narrative. The explanation of this traditional appellation is not found elsewhere in the NT. The only other appearances of Thomas are in lists of the names of the Twelve. See Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15, and Acts 1:13. The name Thomas is a Greek transliteration of the Semitic word for “twin” (*Ta’om*) (see Bultmann, *John*, 400, n. 6). In the Syriac Acts of Thomas (3rd C.), Thomas is referred to as the twin brother of the Lord. Such an association is probably made to legitimate the special revelation on which the book is supposedly based (see Barrett, *John*, 326). John, however, sharply distinguishes between Jesus’ “brothers” (cf. 7:3–5) and his disciples.

sees the journey in a much dimmer light. He assumes that he, along with Jesus and the other disciples, will die at the hands of Jesus' adversaries (11:8). Thomas has no comprehension that the journey to Jerusalem will end not in death, but life (11:44; 20:11–29).

Thomas' failure to understand fully the truth of Jesus typifies the sort of reasoning with which the reader, at this point in the narrative, is quite familiar (cf. 1:46; 2:20; 3:4; 4:11; 6:41–42, 60; 7:3–4, 42; 8:57; 10:20). Thomas fails to grasp the heavenly plan to which Jesus alone has access (cf. 3:13, 32). From the point of view of "the world," however, he assesses the outcome of the trip to Judea correctly. The journey *will* lead to the crucifixion of Jesus (cf. 11:45–53). Culpepper is correct in his assertion that John depicts Thomas as a "clear eyed realist"²¹ (according to critical, world-bound reason, that is). As such, unfortunately, he does not understand that Jesus bears witness to a truth that goes beyond this sort of reasoning.²² John introduces Thomas as one who believes that death will ultimately frustrate Jesus' messianic mission. In his final appearance, he persists in the same opinion (20:25) and does not change until the risen Jesus bids him to do so (20:27).

Thomas in 14:4–5

The next time Thomas appears in the gospel, John again portrays him as one whose vision is limited by a worldly realism. In the long, final discourse between Jesus and his disciples (13:1–16:33), Jesus announces:

In my Father's house there are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go

²¹ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 124.

²² Of Thomas, Schnackenburg states: "He has understood nothing of the promise contained in Jesus' words, but his loyalty to Jesus comes to the fore and he obeys the call in vv. 9–10 to follow Jesus on his journey. He thus becomes a help to readers who are under attack to retain a faith which must endure or struggle in darkness" (*John II*, 328). There is no question of Thomas' loyalty. It is incorrect, however, to hold him up as an example of struggling faith. What John clearly emphasizes is Thomas' failure to see beyond his this-worldly perspective. Faith in Jesus entails seeing him as the source of life, not seeing him as the source of one's death. At this point in John's narrative, no character has an adequate understanding of Jesus (See Giblin, "Tripartite," 462, n. 29). Koester sees Thomas, not as an example of faith, but of a "brash skepticism" which Christians should strive to avoid (*Symbolism*, 256).

and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way I am going (14:2–4).

Thomas interrupts Jesus with a question: “‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How are we able to know the way?’” (14:5). His response to Jesus’ words borders on sarcasm. He exaggerates the impossibility of their knowing the “way” by emphasizing that they do not even know “where” it is they are supposed to be going (οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ὑπάγεις).²³ His words fit into the portrait that John began to create for his readers in Chapter 11. Thomas hears Jesus’ words from a worldly point of view and fails to comprehend the truth of which Jesus speaks. He judges with a skepticism that from the world’s point of view can only be called reasonable (cf. 7:4). The sarcastically confident tone of his words only serves to emphasize how solidly he stands (or thinks he stands) upon the foundation of worldly reason.

As in the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, John binds the interpretation of Jesus’ interlocutor to a strictly literal plane. John narrates no inclination on the part of Thomas to search for a metaphorical understanding of Jesus’ words. He creates an obvious tension between the heavenly point of view from which Jesus speaks and Thomas’ world-bound point of view. John thus emphasizes the otherworldly character of the “way” of which Jesus speaks. There is no middle ground, no possibility of reconciliation except through faith in the witness of Jesus who alone has access to the heavenly realities.²⁴ Thomas will not come to understand this reality until Jesus bridges the gap and brings him to faith (20:27b).

²³ Several manuscripts contain a variant reading of verse 14:4. Rather than the shorter, “Where I am going you will know the way” (ὅπου ἐγὼ ὑπάγω οἴδατε τὴν ὁδόν), they read, “You will know where I am going, and you will know the way” (ὅπου ἐγὼ ὑπάγω οἴδατε καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν οἴδατε). Metzger believes the shorter version to be the original, since “the syntactical harshness of the shorter reading . . . seems to invite amelioration.” The longer version, which addresses both the “where” and the “way” of Thomas’ statement, seems to be an improvement (*A Textual Commentary*, 207). The shorter text better matches the context. The reader, of course, sees the irony in Thomas’ words. Jesus is the only one who has seen where he is going. Jesus is “the way” (cf. 3:13; 10:7–9; 14:6).

²⁴ See Giblin, “Sign Seekers,” 125, 129–130. This is typical of the misunderstandings in John. According to the author, the realities of which Jesus speaks are indeed real. They exist on a “concrete but supra-human” plane of existence.

Thomas as One Who Expresses a Common Human Attitude

In the context of John's overall presentation, Thomas' incomprehension is far from unique. It resembles that human failure to understand that which the reader has seen expressed earlier in the gospel (cf. 8:22).²⁵ Neither is Thomas' uncomprehending point of view unique among the disciples.²⁶ A similar uncomprehending statement is voiced by Philip. His words directly follow the statement of Thomas in 14:5. In this instance, Jesus tells his disciples, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him" (14:6-7).²⁷ Even after Jesus' explicit statement in which he equates himself with the Father, Philip fails to understand. He replies, "'Lord show us the Father and we shall be satisfied'" (14:8). His incomprehension draws a rebuke from Jesus (14:9-11).

Later, in the same discourse, another misunderstanding between Jesus and his disciples arises. Jesus states, "'A little while and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me'" (16:16). His uncomprehending disciples ask, "'What does he mean

²⁵ Brown compares Thomas' incomprehension to that of the Jews (*John* XIII-XXI, 627).

²⁶ Both Schnackenburg and Beasley-Murray note that Thomas' incomprehension represents the attitude of all the disciples (Schnackenburg, *John* III, 64; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 252).

²⁷ In 14:6, John emphasizes Jesus in his relationship to humanity as "the way" to the father. Here "truth" and "life" should not be viewed as two separate items in a list of three but as clarifications of the manner in which Jesus functions as "the way." As both "truth" and "life," Jesus provides humanity with a path to reach the Father. The context of the saying in 14:6 bears this out. In 14:3-4, Jesus focuses on his going to the father and his role as the trailblazer whom others may follow. In 14:5, Thomas questions Jesus regarding his destination and "the way" to get there. In 14:6b, Jesus follows his proclamation regarding his identity as "'the way, the truth, and the life'" with the statement, "'no one comes to the Father except through me.'" Schnackenburg characterizes this assessment as something that most modern exegetes accept (*John* III, 65). Bultmann believes that the term "the way" should not be seen in a mythological manner as separate from the goal. He gives the existential interpretation that once one enters upon the way (through belief) the goal is attained. Schnackenburg rightly criticizes Bultmann's interpretation and stresses that "John keeps firmly to man's transcendental goal (ll. 25 ff.)" (*John* III, 65). Espousing the position of de la Potterie, Brown rightly cautions that the terms "truth" and "life" are not merely functional. They state more than *how* Jesus functions in relation to humanity. They state who he *is* in relation to humanity. See Brown *John* XII-XXI, 630-631. See also de la Potterie, "'Je suis la Voie, la Vérité et la Vie' (Jn. 14:6)," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 88 (1966): 939.

by a little while? We do not know what he means” (16:18). Later, they believe they understand when they hear Jesus’ words, “I am leaving the world and going to the Father” (16:28b). They respond, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things. . . .” (16:29–30a). Jesus makes it clear, however, that as yet they do not understand. “Jesus answered them, ‘Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered . . . and will leave me alone’” (16:32).²⁸

Although Thomas’ somewhat brash attitude might be unique, his point of view is not. The worldly reasoning exhibited by the one who comes to be known as a “doubter” is shared by humanity in general.²⁹ It is against the backdrop of an all-too-human perspective that John’s readers will perceive the risen Jesus in 20:26–29.

Thomas Linked to Jesus’ “Hour”

Notably, in all the scenes in which he appears, Thomas is linked to Jesus’ final hour. The first time Thomas appears in the gospel he speaks of Jesus’ death, “Let us go that we may die with him” (11:16). The next time he appears, Thomas questions Jesus about his return to the Father (14:5). Both scenes turn the reader’s attention to a future event in John’s narrative. With Thomas, the evangelist fuses the uncomprehending point of view of those who judge by worldly reason to their role in the unfolding of Jesus’ “hour.” Even when told by his fellow disciples that Jesus is risen (20:25a), his point of

²⁸ With this prediction of Jesus, John, accomplishes two things. First, he lets his readers know that the disciples have not yet attained a full understanding of Jesus and their relationship to him. Second, he piques his reader’s attention and causes him or her to look to that point in the narrative when this situation will give way to the sort of faithful vision he depicted in the Prologue (1:14), when those who will abandon their Lord will be changed (cf. Schnackenburg, *John* I, 570). The reader knows by now that the agent of this change will be Jesus himself at his return. Although they will scatter from him, he will not abandon them. He told his disciples, “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (14:18). Indeed, through his narration of the encounter with Thomas, John will clearly present Jesus as the agent of this change.

²⁹ J. Kremer notes that, in Chapter 20, John does not wish Thomas’ doubt to be seen as unique. It represents the doubt that all disciples share before they come to believe (“«Nimm deine Hand und lege sie in meine Seite!» Exegetische, hermeneutische und bibeltheologische Überlegungen zu Joh. 20:24–29,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck Vol. III*, eds. F. Van Segbroeck, C.M. Tuckett, G. Van Belle, J. Verheyden (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 2176–2177.

view will not change (20:25b). Thomas' perspective will only be changed by an encounter with the risen Lord.

Jesus' Plan for His Disciples

It is impossible to analyze adequately the encounter between Jesus and Thomas outside of the context of Jesus' purpose in carrying out his own and his Father's will. Over the course of John's narrative, the reader has seen Jesus' intent to reveal himself as the driving force in the unfolding of the gospel. John has made it known to his readers that Jesus' actions flow according to his own (and the Father's) will.³⁰ He has also shown his readers that the success of Jesus' disciples depends on Jesus' enabling action.³¹ In Part Three of his narrative, John details Jesus' plans regarding his chosen disciples as he draws towards the climactic realization of Jesus' hour. Here the reader shall see that Jesus' "hour" and his intent to reveal himself to his disciples are inextricably linked.

Jesus' Farewell Discourse

In 13:1–17:26, John's primary focus is to display for his readers Jesus' relationship to his disciples.³² They comprise an integral component in his life-giving plan and as such will be the recipients of his clear and lasting guidance. The doubter, too, is part of this plan. As Jesus' hour arrives (12:23, 27), John makes a clear separation between Jesus' public ministry to the world and the special relationship he shares with his disciples (12:36b–40). He then dedicates his narrative almost exclusively to an explication of this relationship. John begins by clearly uniting the defining event in Jesus' ministry, his hour, with his love for his own:

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end (13:1).

³⁰ John illustrates this both explicitly (4:34; 5:19–30; 6:38–40, 65; 8:28–29; 10:18) and in the pattern of suggestion, negative response, positive action (2:1–11; 4:46–54; 7:1–14; 11:1–44).

³¹ See 4:36–38; 6:38–40, 65, 70; 8:12; 10:1–6.

³² Bultmann, *John*, 457.

It is for the benefit of his disciples that Jesus "gives" his life (cf. 3:16). In the light of many earlier statements (cf. 3:14–15; 5:20–21; 6:37–40, 65; 7:30; 8:28; 10:7–18), the reader by now knows clearly that all that is about to transpire will come to pass in accordance with the intentions of Jesus and his Father.³³ As Jesus speaks his final words to his disciples, he discloses the details of his plans for those that he chose to accompany him during his earthly mission. John emphasizes, however, that the disciples will not simply be the beneficiaries of Jesus' saving act, they will play a specific role in that act. They are to be his witnesses (cf. 15:26). They are the ones through whom others will come to believe (cf. 17:20).

As Jesus' final discourse to his disciples progresses, John clearly demonstrates to his readers that Jesus' disciples do not, at this point in the narrative, have a full understanding of Jesus' identity (cf. 14:4–5, 8; 16:16–19, 32). In the same discourse, however, John's readers discover that Jesus has specific plans to overcome this problem. The disciples will be given a guide, the Holy Spirit. Jesus assures his disciples that they will not be left alone. He tells them, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth" (14:16–17a).³⁴ It is not by chance that Jesus refers to the Spirit as the "Spirit of Truth" (14:17).³⁵ The Spirit will do more than comfort the disciples in the absence of their leader. It will teach them the truths about their Lord that they, as yet, do not understand (14:26; 16:12), truths they are to relay to others (17:20).

John also informs his readers (as he had done previously [cf. 7:39]) that Jesus' departure is a necessary precondition for the coming of the Spirit. Jesus tells his disciples, "It is to your advantage that I

³³ See Charles Giblin, "John's Narration of the Hearing Before Pilate (Jn. 18:28–19:16a)," *Biblica* 67 (1986): 225.

³⁴ Culpepper identifies this verse among the "mixed prolepses" that "define the nature of Jesus' relationship to the disciples after his death . . ." (*Anatomy*, 63). The conditions for the "fulfillment" of this prolepsis are "established by the end of the narrative, but [its] fruition lies beyond it" (*Anatomy*, 63).

Although Jesus states in 14:17 that the Spirit "dwells with you," the full function of the Spirit has not yet been realized. He has tied the coming of the Spirit into the complex of events to be realized in his hour. In 14:25–26, John makes it clear that the disciples have more to learn after Jesus' departure.

³⁵ Schnackenburg states that the term "Spirit of Truth" is to be understood in a technical sense. He notes, as a point of comparison, the differentiation of "Spirit of Truth" and "spirit of error" in 1 John [cf. 4:6] (*John* III, 75).

go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you'” (16:7). John follows Jesus’ statements regarding the coming of the Spirit (16:4–15) with a dialogue in which the disciples continue to exhibit an inability to comprehend fully Jesus’ true relation to the Father (16:16–32). He thus highlights for his readers the necessity of the Spirit’s coming.

John emphasizes that Jesus maintains precise control over the formation of his disciples. As his witnesses, they play a specific role in conjunction with the Spirit.

But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning (15:26–27).³⁶

The disciples are one-half of a two-part witness. They bear witness to the life of the earthly Jesus. What they see and hear will be augmented by the guidance of the Spirit (16:12, 14) and the remembrance it brings (14:25–26). John presents the disciples precisely as the human component of the Lord’s witness. The resurrection appearances to the disciples must be considered in light of this special witnessing role they bear. They unite the post-resurrection manifestations of Jesus to his earthly life. Thomas’ witness to the resurrection is, therefore, better understood from the point of view of Jesus’ saving plan, not from that of Thomas’ demand.³⁷ Jesus wants him to believe and to convey to others what he witnessed.

The Context of Jn. 20:24–29

Jesus’ appearance to Thomas is the last of four scenes relating to his resurrection.³⁸ The first includes the discovery of the empty tomb

³⁶ Their being with him from the beginning (ἐξ ἀρχῆς . . . μεθ’ ὑμῶν)?? refers to the beginning of his earthly ministry (cf. 16:4). John refers to the unique status of Jesus’ hand-picked disciples (Brown, *John* XIII–XXI, 701). It is incorrect to correlate their witnessing to the witness of other characters in the gospel. For another opinion, see Koester, who equates the witness of the Samaritan woman to the witness the disciples will bear (*Symbolism*, 45).

³⁷ The pattern of suggestion, negative response, positive action observed by Giblin demonstrates well that Jesus acts according to his own terms, not according to the terms of his supplicants (Giblin, “Suggestion,” 197–211).

³⁸ Two recent commentators attempt to situate Jn. 20:24–29 into a literary structure that encompasses all or most of Chapter 20. Ignace de la Potterie includes

by Mary Magdalene and the race to the tomb by Peter and the Beloved Disciple (20:1–10). The second is the appearance to Mary at the tomb (20:11–18). The third is the appearance to the disciples (20:19–23). The appearance to Thomas (20:24–29) is the final scene. In the final verse of this unit (20:29), John closely connects the appearance to Thomas with the gospel's purpose statement (20:30–31).

I will examine each of the scenes that lead up to Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus with an eye to how John conditions his readers to perceive the action of the risen Jesus in the transformation of those who are to become his witnesses. This transformative act John illustrates most clearly in the case of Thomas. Jesus completely overturns Thomas' mode of comprehension as he manifests himself, not as Thomas' merely human teacher who died and is somehow come back to life, but as his God, his source of life (cf. 11:25).

John's account of the resurrection begins at the tomb of Jesus. Before the reader arrives at this site, he or she must travel with John through the events that lead to Jesus' cross and pause with the narrator at the foot of the cross to witness the Lord's demise. Even as he or she reads of the events that lead to the cross, the reader sees that Jesus maintains control of his fate. John's audience knows that Jesus' death takes place in accordance with his own will (17:1, 5, 13; 18:1–11, 36), the will of the Father (19:11), and in accordance with scripture (18:9; 19:24, 36–37).

20:30–31 as part of a concentric structure encompassing all of chapter 20. He divides the chapter into five units: A (20:1–10), B (20:11–18), C (20:19–23), B' (20:24–29), A' (20:30–31). Accordingly he sees the appearance to the disciples as the focus of the last chapter of the gospel. See Ignace de la Potterie, "Genèse de la foi pascale d'après Jn. 20," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984): 27.

Dorothy Lee divides Chapter 20 into only three sections, each culminating with an appearance of Jesus (20:1–18; 19–23; 24–29). She too sees the scenes arranged concentrically, with 20:19–23 as the focus. See Dorothy A. Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith: The Role of Mary Magdalene and Thomas in John 20," *JST* 50 (1995): 38–39. Her first unit (20:1–18) is usually seen as two units, since the return of the disciples to their homes (πρὸς αὐτούς) in 20:10 indicates the end the scene in which they two visited the tomb alone. In defense of Lee, however, 20:11 seems to indicate that Mary had been in the background as the disciples examined the tomb. She could therefore provide the thread that ties both scenes into one.

Both these theories, which focus on 20:19–23 as the concentric core of the narrative, fail to take into account the importance of Thomas' confession "My Lord and my God." It is unlikely that such a climactic confession would occupy one of the outer rings in a concentric structure. Additionally, neither commentator demonstrates an objective basis within the text such as repeated terminology or imagery to substantiate the existence of these structures.

After Jesus' death however, the reader encounters a lull in the narrative, during which the will of Jesus is not emphasized (19:38–42). As John recounts for his readers the lonely scene of Jesus' burial, he makes no mention that these events transpire in accordance with will of the Father, or the Son, or in accordance with Scripture.³⁹ The force of Jesus' will that had driven the entire story is strangely absent from the narrative. Through these verses the narrative is propelled by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus alone. From the cross, the reader follows Jesus' body as the two take it and lay it in a garden tomb near the place where he was crucified (19:41). They bury Jesus according to the custom of the Jews, binding him in linen cloth and spices (19:39–40). Against this lonely backdrop, dully animated by the mundane human labors that follow death, John will illustrate the overwhelming action of Jesus' saving will.

Mary Magdalene's Discovery, the Disciples' Race and the Appearance to Mary

After the burial scene, John keeps his readers' attention fixed on the tomb. Jesus had been laid to rest on the "day of preparation" (19:41). That is the day before the sabbath. John takes up his narration on the day after the sabbath, "Now on the first day of the week,⁴⁰ Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark,⁴¹ and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb" (20:1).⁴²

³⁹ This does not suggest that God's will is here absent. Rather, with this lull, John creates a poignant, literary effect.

⁴⁰ The first day of the week is the day after the sabbath, Sunday (Lindars, *John*, 599).

⁴¹ John's reference to darkness indicates an early hour in the morning. It may also carry with it some symbolic value (cf. 8:12; 12:35). In this case it might reflect the darkness of Mary's state before she recognizes Jesus. See Schnackenburg, *John* III, 308; also Koester, *Symbolism*, 10. All three synoptic gospels make reference to the early hour. Mark notes that the sun had risen (Mk. 16:2). Matthew's version indicates that it still might be dark: "after [late in] the Sabbath towards dawn" (Ὁγε δὲ σαββάτων τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ) (Mt. 28:1). It is clear that John relies on traditional material. An exact congruence with any of the other gospels, however, cannot be established. John, it appears, has reworked any sources on which he might have relied. See note 42 below.

⁴² John's version of the scene at the empty tomb, although it shares much in common with the synoptic narratives, diverges from them significantly on several counts. First of all, Mary goes to the tomb alone. In each of the synoptic accounts there are several women. In Matthew, they are Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" (Mt. 28:1). In Mark we find Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James,

This is the second mention of Mary Magdalene in the gospel. In the first she stood at the foot of the cross with Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, and Mary the wife of Clopas (the beloved disciple is also nearby) (19:26–27). One can only guess at the precise nature of the pre-resurrection relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus. Culpepper describes her as a “devoted follower.”⁴³ The company she keeps at the foot of the cross might indicate that she had close ties to his family as well. In any case, her presence at both the foot of the cross and the tomb indicates a deep devotion to Jesus.

John states no reason for Mary's presence at the tomb. It appears that she is there to mourn. John well illustrates the mourner's shock at seeing the stone taken from the tomb. At the sight, without pause, “She ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they laid him’” (20:2).⁴⁴

and Salome (Mk. 16:1). Luke lists Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Joanna (Lk. 24:10). In John, Mary Magdalene had been at the foot of the cross along with Jesus' mother, his mother's sister and Mary the wife of Clopas (19:25). Schnackenburg supposes that John does not mention the other women (whom he would have found in his source) in order to increase the dramatic effect of the narrative. Thus, “the same woman who, utterly shocked, rushes away from the open tomb, is then overwhelmed by the call of the risen one” (*John* III, 308).

Another significant difference from the synoptic accounts is the reason for Mary's presence at the tomb. John gives no reason for her being there. In Mk. and Lk., the women came to complete the Jewish burial rite. In John, Jesus' entombment is complete (20:39–40). See Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 152. The question of John's sources for his narrative of the tomb scene cannot be answered with absolute certainty. It seems reasonable that he combined three others with his own. The narrative thus consists of: 1) the tradition of the women at the tomb, 2) the tradition regarding the women's witness to the disciples, 3) the tradition of Peter's trip to the tomb (cf. Lk. 24:12), and 4) the tradition of his own community regarding the beloved disciple at the tomb. This is the opinion of Xavier Léon-Dufour (*Resurrection and the Message of Easter*, trans. R.N. Wilson [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974], 171–181).

⁴³ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 144.

⁴⁴ Mary uses the pronoun, “we.” It is likely that John here uses a source that had more than one woman at tomb. See Willie Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 56–57. None of the synoptic versions, however, contain such a statement. Lüdemann guesses that it might be an “inauthentic” plural of the sort customarily seen in ancient speech (*Resurrection*, 152; see also Bultmann, *John*, 529, n. 4; 530, n. 3). Brown notes Bultmann's theory that Mary's “we” represents a Greek adaptation of an Aramaic idiom in which the first person plural is used in place of the singular. He wonders why the plural is not found in 20:20 when Mary makes a similar statement to Jesus [whom she supposes to be the gardener]. (See *John* XIII–XXI, 984). In the present context, the “we” should be understood as idiomatic.

The reader (who knows that her assessment of the situation is far from correct) sees in her reaction a pure worldly reasoning. She sees no evidence of hope, only evidence of some further outrage against her Lord. After Mary's announcement, John turns his reader's attention to Peter and the beloved disciple.

Hearing Mary's grim news, "Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. They both ran but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first" (20:3).⁴⁵ Although the beloved disciple is the first to arrive at the tomb, he does not enter. Instead he stoops to look in. John draws the reader's attention to the "linen cloths" that the disciple saw lying there (20:5). When Peter arrives he enters the tomb. John again calls the reader's attention to the grave cloths. He states that Peter "saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself" (20:6b–7).

John intends his reader to see something remarkable about the manner in which the grave cloths are found in the tomb. He points especially to the cloth that covered Jesus' face and the fact that it was not lying with the linen cloths that had covered his body. "The napkin, which had been on his head [was] not lying with linen cloths but rolled up in one place by itself" (καὶ τὸ σουδάριον ὃ ἦν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ, οὐ μετὰ τῶν ὀθονίων κείμενον ἀλλὰ χωρὶς ἐντετυλιγμένον εἰς ἓνα τόπον) [20:7]. This is clearly not the state of affairs one might expect to discover had Mary's assessment of the situation (grave robbers) been correct.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Most commentators regard the race to the tomb as a polemic regarding the relationship between John's community and the rest of the church. For a summary of these arguments see: Lüdemann, *Resurrection*, 153.

⁴⁶ The term for the cloth that had covered his face (σουδάριον) is the same John used for the cloth that had been wrapped around (περιεδέδετο) the face of Lazarus (11:44). The verb, however, which John uses for "rolled up" (ἐντετυλιγμένον), the perfect participle, passive of ἐντυλίσσω, is unique in John. It is the same verb that Matthew and Luke use to describe the wrapping of Jesus' body in a linen cloth (cf. Lk. 23:53; Mt. 27:59). It is likely that John borrows the word from the terminology of burial customs. Some argue that John indicates that Jesus passed through the cloth, leaving it rolled exactly as it had been placed on his head. It thus would not have been tangled with the linen cloths (οὐ μετὰ τῶν ὀθονίων) but apart (χωρὶς) in one place (εἰς ἓνα τόπον). See Lindars, *John*, 601 (This is not Lindars' own view). See also Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 986–987. According to this interpretation, it would be seeing the vestiges of a miracle that led the beloved disciple to believe. The majority of commentators believe that John mentions the condition of the burial cloths as a polemic against the rumors that the grave was robbed. Grave robbers

The beloved disciple follows Peter into the tomb. John tells his readers that the scene so struck this disciple that "He saw and believed" (20:8b).⁴⁷ The reader might well think that the beloved disciple has come to the sort of belief suggested in 20:31, until he or she reads John's next words which are among the most difficult to interpret in the gospel. "For as yet they did/had not known the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes" (20:9–10).⁴⁸

If one takes the form of the verb "to know" (ᾔδεισαν) in 20:9 in the sense of the imperfect, the line says that they "did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead." Such a reading would clearly indicate that the beloved disciple's faith is somehow inadequate.⁴⁹ If one takes the verb to be a pluperfect, however, the verse conveys the sense that up until the point where they saw the tomb "they had not understood the scripture." But, once having seen the tomb, they did understand.⁵⁰

Whether one reads the pluperfect or the imperfect, the text indicates that the sight of the tomb *alone* was not adequate to arouse the proper sort of faith. For it either arouses a faith without understanding or it arouses a faith that presupposes (or includes) an understanding of the scriptures (cf. 20:8). Clearly, however, John wishes his readers to understand that the beloved disciple had a special insight into the scene of the tomb, an insight that surpassed that of

would not take the time to roll up the cloth into a tidy ball. See Lindars, *John*, 601; Schnackenburg, *John*, 311–312; Luedemann, *Resurrection*, 153.

⁴⁷ Schnackenburg refers to the special insight of the beloved disciple exhibited in 21:7 and concludes that 20:9 (translating ᾔδεισαν as an imperfect) implies "no diminution" of the disciple's exemplary faith. Verse 9 represents a sentence the evangelist took from his source without wholly removing the tension between the verses (*John* III, 312–313).

⁴⁸ Marxsen believes that the race to the tomb is a Johannine adaptation of a source bearing similarities to Lk. 24:12. He thinks that both Peter and the beloved disciple "see and believe" and concludes that the story was added to demonstrate the priority of Peter as well as the high place of the beloved disciple (Marxsen, *Resurrection*, 57–59).

⁴⁹ Several copyists have tried to eliminate this difficulty by either changing the verb to a plural in 20:8 or by changing the verb to a singular in 20:9. See Brown, *John* XIII–XXI, 987. The majority of commentators (Brown, Schnackenburg, Lindars, Barrett, Beasley-Murray etc.) and the majority of English translations (RSV, NAB, JB, etc.) read the imperfect. Bultmann defends the pluperfect. He sees 20:9 as a scribal gloss, by which the scribe intended to indicate that they had not understood until they saw the tomb (*John*, 685).

⁵⁰ See Luedemann, *Resurrection*, 153.

either Peter or Mary. And, in this context, the pluperfect reading flows more easily.

Even in the case of the pluperfect reading, however, the difficulty does not completely vanish. If he did believe and understand, the behavior of the beloved disciple seems odd. For John does not say that he announces this good news to anyone. Rather, John writes, "Then the disciples went back to their homes" (20:10). The fact that both the beloved disciple and Peter return to their homes, apparently without telling others what happened, might indicate that the beloved disciple's understanding of the meaning of the resurrection is somehow not fully formed.⁵¹ Or it might indicate that his role as a disciple of the risen Lord is not yet fully formed. In either case, the narrative seems somehow incomplete.

There is no sign of the sort of gleeful rejoicing one might expect. Neither is there any sign that others might come to belief due to their word as Jesus had intended (17:20). The lull in the progress of Jesus' will that the reader encountered at the burial scene appears to continue. His mission appears to stop short in the disciples' homes. The reader might here recognize the sort of behavior Jesus prophesied: "You will be scattered, every man to his home" (16:32).⁵² The homeward return of Peter and the beloved disciple does not resolve the scene.⁵³ John thus subordinates this episode to the main account, the appearance to Mary. In this first appearance of the risen Jesus, John will make clear that knowledge of the resurrection comes only through the direct action of the risen Lord.

After being told that two disciples returned home, the reader discovers that Mary had followed them back to the tomb. In the verses directly following the one describing their departure, John tells his readers, "But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb" (20:11). Apparently, the disciples did not offer her any reassuring news regarding what they had seen.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Brown believes this verse indicates nothing about the state of mind of the disciples. John uses it simply to "get the disciples off the scene and give the stage to Magdalene" (*John XIII–XXI*, 988). Ignace de la Potterie, however, recalls Jesus' words of 16:32 and concludes that their return home does not reflect the behavior of those who had been significantly transformed by the experience (*Genèse*, 32–33).

⁵² de la Potterie, *Genèse*, 32–33.

⁵³ See Dorothy Lee, "Partnership in Easter Faith: The Role of Mary Magdalene and Thomas in John 20," *JSTT* 58 (1995): 40.

⁵⁴ The text describes no contact between Mary and the other two disciples after

For her assessment of the situation remained the same. So settled is she in her view that the body was stolen that she remained unaffected by the sight of two angels. She stooped to look in, and the angels addressed her, saying, “‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him’” (20:13).

The fact that the angels do not deliver to Mary the message of the resurrection is most unusual.⁵⁵ In keeping with their name (*ἄγγελος* means messenger), angels are traditionally depicted as bearers of news from God.⁵⁶ Here, however, they do not offer her news of the resurrection. They simply question her. For John, the vision of angels is not an adequate basis for coming to knowledge of the resurrection. Such knowledge comes only through personal contact with the risen Jesus himself.

Remarkably, Mary’s incomprehension persists even when she turns and directly eyed her risen Lord. John states, “She turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus” (20:15). Jesus himself spoke to her, repeating the question of the angels, but Mary remained uncomprehending. “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away’” (20:15). John makes it clear to his readers that the resurrection of Jesus somehow remains outside Mary’s ordinary perceptive abilities.⁵⁷ Mary’s supposition that Jesus was the gardener clearly illustrated her mode of thought. As he had with other instances of

their examination of the tomb. To the reader, it looks as if they were oblivious to her presence outside the tomb. From the point of view of those wishing to explore John’s sources, this is clear evidence of a redactional seam. It is likely that John inserted traditional material regarding the women’s witness to the disciples (cf. Lk. 24:10–11) as well as his version of the disciples’ trip to the tomb (cf. Lk. 24:12) into his source regarding the women at the tomb (cf. Mk. 16:1–8; Mt. 28:1, 5–10; Lk. 24:1–9). Although John shares much in common with the synoptic accounts, a reliance on any one source is impossible to establish (see Léon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 168–181; Lüdemann, *Resurrection*, 152–160).

⁵⁵ In each of the synoptic gospels, an angel (or angels) delivers the news of the resurrection (cf. Mt. 28:5–7; Mk. 16:5–7; Lk. 24:5b–7).

⁵⁶ See Gen. 16:11; 22:11; 31:11; Ex. 3:2; Jud. 13:3–5. See also Lk. 1:13–17, 26–33.

⁵⁷ In light of John’s consistent portrayal of the human failure to perceive Jesus’ divinity, it seems incorrect to suppose that Mary does not recognize Jesus because of her tears. This is the opinion of Lee. See Lee, “Partnership,” 41. Lee also

misunderstandings, John displays the conflict between ordinary, earthly perceptions of reality and another sort of reality.⁵⁸

Mary finally recognizes Jesus only when he calls her by name. “Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni’ (which means teacher)” (20:16).⁵⁹ The author has made it clear that it was neither the sight of Jesus nor the sound of his voice that spurred Mary’s recognition. Seeing Jesus call Mary by name, John’s readers should recall John’s earlier words regarding Jesus’ identity as the good shepherd: “He calls his own sheep by name” (10:3); and Jesus’ words, “I know mine and mine know me” (10:14).⁶⁰ Mary’s powers of recognition are not what enable her to recognize Jesus. Rather, his call, his display of personal knowledge into her person, causes her recognition.⁶¹ The reader sees that Mary is one

describes Mary’s presence at the tomb as a sign of her “determination.” Apparently, Lee wishes to equate Mary’s “persistent” search for what she believes to be a corpse with a desire for faith that Jesus ultimately rewards (“Partnership,” 40–41). Similarly Lee equates Thomas’ remark in 20:25 with a positive desire that leads to faith (“Partnership,” 43–44). The text, however, does not support her hypotheses. Mary’s incomprehension and Thomas’ unbelief are human limitations that the risen Jesus overcomes, not positive characteristics that he rewards.

⁵⁸ See Giblin, “Sign Seekers,” 125, 129–130.

⁵⁹ One should not suppose that Mary, having heard Jesus call her by name, turned, clearly saw Jesus for the first time and recognized him. For she had already turned to face him (20:14) and had spoken with him (20:15). Sandra Schneiders theorizes that her turning “is obviously not physical.” She notes that the first turning is a turning “around” (εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω). Whereas, the second time she simply turns. She links this second turning to the book of Jeremiah. She states that her second turning correlates to “the second member of the ‘turning and turning again,’ the ‘turning away’ and ‘turning back,’ the apostasy and conversion, that the word *sub* in the book of Jeremiah captures.” See Sandra M. Schneiders, “John 20:11–18: The Encounter of the Easter Jesus with Mary Magdalene—A Transformative Feminist Reading” in *What Is John? Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. Segovia (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1996), 162–163. Since there is no apostasy, or turning away on the part of Mary in this scene, this interpretation is unlikely. Schnackenburg sees her turning as “an outward gesture” which represents her inner turning (*John* III, 317). He prefers to read στραφείσα as “turned towards” rather than “turned around” and thus proposes to eliminate the difficulty (*John* III, 317, n. 49). Nonetheless, since Mary had already both seen and heard Jesus, it must be his personal address that arouses her recognition. See Lindars, *John*, 606; Bultmann, *John*, 686.

As to the title, “Rabboni,” with which Mary refers to Jesus, John’s explanatory gloss (“which means teacher”) indicates that it carries no special meaning (as opposed to “Rabbi”). Mary recognized Jesus to be the same teacher she had known before his crucifixion. See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 375.

⁶⁰ See Bultmann, *John*, 686; Schnackenburg, *John* III, 317.

⁶¹ Brown views Is. 43:1 as a possible Old Testament background passage: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine” (*John* XIII–XXI, 1010). Regarding Jesus’ calling Mary by name, Xavier Léon-Dufour

of his sheep. He knows her. For such as her, Jesus lays down his life and takes it up (10:10–11, 15, 17–18). He calls Mary in accordance with his own and the Father's will (cf. 10:25).

The transformative power of Jesus' personal knowledge into the hearts of those he encounters is a theme John introduced with the call of Nathanael (cf. 1:47b–48), repeated in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (4:18–19), and will repeat again in Jesus' encounter with Thomas (20:27).⁶² Mary had presumed Jesus to be dead. Through this encounter she is changed and is made able to know Jesus lives. In her moment of recognition, Jesus reveals himself as both her faith's object and the one who enables it. With this faith-giving action, the force of Jesus' will (which had been absent since the scene of the burial) returns to the fore of the narrative.

After Mary finally recognizes Jesus, she apparently seizes hold of him; for Jesus must tell her, "Do not keep holding onto me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (20:17a).⁶³ The possibility of physical contact clearly illustrates that Mary encounters the one and the same Jesus she had known beforehand. Mary's clinging, however, indicates that she misunderstands Jesus' purpose. The way in which Jesus explains his command that she desist indicates that the current state of affairs (in which she is now able to hold him) will change with his ascent to the Father.⁶⁴

notes that it is unusual for Semites to pronounce the name of an interlocutor in direct discourse. "Woman," he states would be more usual (cf. 2:4). The use of her name in this instance indicates that Jesus reaches the interior of her being (*Lecture de l'Évangile selon Jean IV: L'heure de la glorification* (Paris: Éditions Du Seuil, 1996), 220).

⁶² Léon-Dufour sees a structural analogue between Jesus' insight into the heart of Thomas (20:25, 27) and his insight into the heart of Nathanael (1:47–51). See *Lecture IV*, 246–247. The same pattern of recognizing Jesus after he demonstrates his penetrating insight into another can be seen in the encounter with the Samaritan woman and here in Jesus' encounter with Mary.

⁶³ John's phrasing indicates that Mary is already holding him. The present imperative with μή "is used to forbid the continuation of an act" (*Zerwick*, no. 246). See also *BDF*, no. 336.

⁶⁴ See Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 138–139. It is probable that John here incorporates in his narrative a tradition that he shares with Mt. 28:9 (see Fuller above). It is not necessary to follow those, such as Bultmann and Culpepper, who take Mary's desire to hold Jesus as a critique of her lack of understanding. See Bultmann, *John*, 687; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 144. One can view it simply as John's way of illustrating that Mary indeed recognizes Jesus as the master she loved before the crucifixion and continues to love. Jesus directs the course of his revelation. Mary should not be blamed for not

Jesus' intentions continue to propel the narrative. He directs Mary's actions: "'Go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (20:17b).⁶⁵ Here, John indicates to his readers that Jesus will soon ascend to the Father and no longer be physically accessible to his disciples in the way he had been. In order for Jesus' statements to be fully understood, however, they must be interpreted in the light of what Jesus had previously told his disciples. Two important bits of information are contained in this message. First, Jesus announces his immanent return to the Father. Second, for the first time, Jesus refers to his disciples as his "brothers" (τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου).⁶⁶

The plan Jesus laid out for his disciples in his farewell discourse now unfolds (cf. 15:27; 16:4). Those statements Jesus made regarding his return to his Father are no longer to be understood as a future event (14:2–4; cf. 13:1).⁶⁷ The hour of Jesus' glorification has arrived. Jesus also emphasizes that his disciples are now to share a filial relationship with him (cf. 1:12). Earlier in the narrative, John told his readers of an upcoming new relationship that Jesus would share with his disciples. In this relationship, the disciples' knowledge of Jesus and the Father would be deepened (cf. 14:20, 26; 15:15;

understanding what Jesus had not yet revealed: that the physical earth-bound relationship must terminate.

Schneiders suggests that the grammatical construction of the command not to touch, "with the emphatic placement of the *μου* at the beginning of the command and closest to the negative," places an emphasis on the "*μου*." She next proposes that the verb for touching (*ἅππου*), in this case, does not so much mean physical contact as it does interpersonal union (cf. 1 Jn. 5:18). She concludes that what Jesus is saying is something along the lines of: "Do not touch [have interpersonal relations] with *me*, as I stand here now, but direct your touching to my brothers. That is where I shall be found (among the people of the church) from now on" ("The Encounter," 164–165). This interpretation falls short in its failure to address the absence of a specific suggestion, on the part of Jesus, that Mary redirect her touching elsewhere.

⁶⁵ In 20:16–17, Léon-Dufour observes a pattern similar to that found in Mt. 28:9–10. Mary's commission follows a tripartite pattern of initiative (by Jesus), recognition (by Mary), and commission (by Jesus) (*Lecture IV*, 215–216). That Jesus here commissions Mary to deliver a message is further evidence that John focuses more on the actions of Jesus and his role in the faith of the church than on criticizing the reactions of those he encounters.

⁶⁶ "Brothers" does not refer to Jesus' blood relatives (e.g., James) as C.H. Dodd suggests (See *Historical Tradition*, 147). Rather Jesus refers to a new filial relationship he shares with his disciples (Giblin, "Tripartite," 459). His use of the terminology "my Father and your Father" in the same sentence augments this meaning (Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 993–994).

⁶⁷ Thomas, in particular, is associated with this statement (cf. 12:5).

16:15).⁶⁸ With the resurrection, the dawn of this new relationship has come.

The experience of Jesus still alive after his crucifixion unveils for the disciples the full meaning of that which they previously could not fully comprehend (cf. 14:5, 7–9; 16:17, 31). John has indicated from early in the narrative, that disciples are to interpret his words and actions (2:22; 12:13–16) in the light of the sign Jesus becomes through his resurrection,⁶⁹ and they are to interpret his resurrection in the light of the words with which he prepared them (13:19; 16:4).⁷⁰

Mary does not fail to carry out Jesus' instructions. John writes, "Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her" (20:18). John, however, does not tell his readers how the disciples react to Mary's words. The reader never learns whether they accept or reject them. Rather, John leads his readers to the second appearance of the risen Lord.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

John's next scene takes place on the same day as the appearance to Mary, Sunday the day after the sabbath. Only, in this instance it was evening. The disciples were gathered together in a room.⁷¹ John adds the unusual detail that the doors are closed "for fear of the Jews" (20:19). While the disciples were assembled behind closed doors, "Jesus came and stood among them" (ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον). Despite the precautions against intrusion taken by the disciples, Jesus appeared in their midst. Here, John is not trying to

⁶⁸ Although 15:15 indicates that Jesus had already made known to his disciples everything the Father told him, 14:26 and 16:15 make it clear that the proper understanding of this knowledge presupposes the reception of the Spirit.

⁶⁹ Giblin, "Tripartite," 449, 462–463.

⁷⁰ Jesus told Thomas and the other disciples, "I tell you this now before it happens, so you may believe when it does happen that I am" (13:19). Thomas' statement "My Lord and my God" is equivalent to recognizing Jesus as "I am."

⁷¹ John emphasizes that the day is still Sunday. When Jesus appears to Thomas, it will again be on a Sunday. It appears that John wishes to emphasize the presence of the Lord at the Christian gathering. Several copyists have added συνηγμένοι after μαθηταί. Metzger suggests that this might have been done as an allusion to Mt. 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered . . ." (*A Textual Commentary*, 218). This verse may reflect John's use of a traditional source. The style is not characteristic of John's own. Schnackenburg notes that placing the participle first in the genitive absolute is unusual for John [Οὐσης οὖν ὀψίας τῇ ἡμέρᾳ] (*John* III, 323 n. 71).

prove that the risen Jesus can pass through walls. Rather, he demonstrates that Jesus' revelatory actions transpire according to his own will and transcend human limitations.⁷²

Once in the room, Jesus greets his disciples. "Peace be with you," he says. He then displays "his hands and his side" (20:20a). Clearly, John wishes to demonstrate that the risen Jesus and the Jesus who had been crucified are one and the same.⁷³ The reader is told, "The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." John then describes Jesus' mission command, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (20:21b).⁷⁴ Next, John describes what for the reader has been a long anticipated event, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. "He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (20:22b). This gift John connects directly to the disciples' power to bind or loose sins (20:23).

Jesus' actions in this scene are significant in four ways. First, when he appears to his disciples, he displays his wounds, thus offering the ten the same visual evidence he will later offer Thomas (cf. 20:27). Second, his missionary command to the disciples (20:21) makes it clear that Jesus has come in order to fulfill his own purpose. They are to bring others to belief in order that all who do believe will live in union with the Father and Son (17:18, 20–21). In a like manner, with his appearance to Thomas, Jesus will fulfill his own purpose.

Third, Jesus' double greeting in verses 19 and 21 (εἰρήνη ὑμῖν) recalls the words he had earlier spoken to his disciples: "'Peace [εἰρήνη] I leave you; my peace I give you. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have heard me tell you, 'I am going away and am coming to you. . . . I am going to the Father'" (14:27–28). He

⁷² Beasley-Murray, *John*, 378.

⁷³ The display of the wounds is most likely included in one of John's sources. In John, Jesus displays his hands and side rather than his hands and feet. John is the only gospel writer to mention the piercing of Jesus' side (Jn. 19:24). In contrast to Luke's use of what is probably the same tradition, Jesus does not display his wounds in order to dispel the doubt of the disciples (cf. Lk. 24:38–39). John most likely eliminates any mention of doubt on the part of the others in order that he might concentrate the theme solely in the story of Thomas, a story that is most likely John's own composition. See Léon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 184–189; Lüdemann, *Resurrection*, 163–165; Schnackenburg, *John III*, 323–330; Lindars, *John*, 614. The theme of doubt is not unique to John and Luke. Matthew (28:17) and the Markan appendix (16:13–14) also treat the doubt of the disciples.

⁷⁴ Jesus' actions follow the same pattern noted above regarding the appearance to Mary. Jesus initiates the action. The disciples recognize him. Jesus commissions them. See Léon-Dufour, *Lecture IV*, 215–216.

also told them, “I have said these things to you in order that you may have peace [εἰρήνη] in me. In the world you have tribulation. But take courage. I have conquered the world” (16:33). Jesus’ words regarding the peace he gives his disciples were directly related to his going away, his return and his conquering the world. His greeting of peace recalls those words which now, for the first time, his disciples can fully understand. His appearing to them risen is the cause that brings about the understanding of the disciples (cf. 2:22; 12:16).

Fourth, Jesus foretold to his disciples the coming of the gift of the Spirit they now receive. He stated, “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring you remembrance of all that I have said to you” (14:26). Specifically what their remembrance is intended to bring about is belief in his divine identity (cf. 13:19).⁷⁵ John makes it clear that Jesus has told his disciples these things for a reason. In his farewell discourse, he says to them, “And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe” (14:29). His resurrection appearances are meant to bring about recognition of his unique status as God’s son, and this recognition is to be connected to what he has told them beforehand. Jesus’ word and his resurrection appearances are tied together in one revelatory event, an event that unfolds according to his own plan for his disciples.⁷⁶

Upon reaching John’s narration of this appearance the reader meets what at first might appear to be the gospel’s climax. The risen Lord has appeared to his disciples, bestowed the Spirit upon them, and issued his missionary command. But, John does not allow his readers to dwell on this scene. He immediately introduces Thomas and the previously undisclosed fact of his absence.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ At the beginning of his final discourse with his disciples, Jesus predicts the betrayal of Judas and tells his disciples, “I tell you this now, before it happens, that when it does happen, you may believe that *I am* [emphasis mine]” (13:19). Here the ἐγώ εἰμι should be understood in the absolute sense as a clear reference to the divine name. See Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 555; Ball, *I Am*, 115–118.

⁷⁶ John will give his clearest demonstration of this pattern through his narration of Jesus’ encounter with Thomas and the events that lead up to it (20:24–29).

⁷⁷ John’s failure to mention his absence can be attributed to his use of sources as noted above.

The Unbeliever (20:24–25)

With the encounter between Jesus and Thomas John gives his readers much more than a critique of a faith that demands miraculous demonstrations or a proof of the physicality of the risen Lord's body.⁷⁸ Rather, John identifies Jesus in his relationship to Thomas as the object of Thomas' faith and as the one who makes his faith possible. Examining the episode in the context of the themes we have traced *throughout* the gospel will make this clear.

The Disciples' Witness to Thomas (20:24–25)

The scene opens: "Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came" (20:24). The other disciples tell their less fortunate brother, "'We have seen the Lord'" (20:25). In so doing, the newly commissioned disciples, recipients of the Holy Spirit, bear witness for the first time to Jesus' resurrection. Their mission has begun! But Thomas replied, "'Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the print of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe'" (20:25b). No sooner has the witnessing mission of the disciples begun than it is frustrated by one of their own. Soon, however, the reader will see an utterly changed Thomas.

Thomas' Statement in Light of the Manner in which John Portrays Him

The manner in which Thomas phrases his statement of unbelief should come as no surprise to the reader. It falls well within the parameters of the sort of behavior he previously exhibited in the narrative. What the reader has seen of Thomas to this point in the gospel is a "realist" known to express an acute sense of the way of the world.

⁷⁸ Some have seen proving Jesus' physicality to be the point of this passage. See, Richter, *Studien zum Johannesevangelium*, 184. Schnelle supposes the scene is composed to emphasize the reality of Jesus' experience on the cross (*Antidoketische*, 256). By the time the reader reaches the Thomas story, however, both of these are foregone conclusions. John has already demonstrated that Mary could lay hold of Jesus (20:17) and that the disciples could see his wounds (20:20). By the time the reader reaches 20:24, it is understood that the risen Jesus is the same person whom the disciples have known and whom the women and the beloved disciple had seen crucified. What John tells his readers with this encounter is something beyond what he has already said.

For instance, he correctly surmised that if Jesus made his final trip to Judea, his powerful enemies would lay hold of him and put him to death (11:16). He is also known to express his "worldly-wise" point of view with an acerbic tongue. In 14:5, he rejects Jesus' talk of an other-worldly "way," with a clearly sarcastic statement, "'We do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?'"

His response to the disciples' news of the resurrection is in keeping with his character. He ridicules their claim with an exaggerated realism. He knows that Jesus was crucified and makes a deliberate and systematic reference to each of the death dealing wounds in order to drive home his point: Jesus is dead. If Jesus talks about a "way," Thomas points out that he has failed to explain "where" he is going. If the disciples say they have "seen" the Lord, Thomas says he will have to "touch" him. It is far easier to see Thomas' language as befitting a personality that tends towards sarcasm than it is to see it as a genuine request to probe Jesus' wounds.

An almost universal presupposition made by commentators regarding Thomas' statement in 20:25 is that it is a *demand* for physical proof of the resurrection.⁷⁹ The flaw in this interpretation is not easily missed. If Thomas did not believe that Jesus had risen, with whom does he lodge his impious request? As noted earlier, several commentators have seen the passage in which the royal official asks Jesus to heal his son as a criticism of the sort of faith that demands proof. But when the royal official asks for a miracle, he addresses his request to *Jesus* (4:47). Similarly, the members of the group in Chapter Six who demand a legitimating sign from Jesus address their demand to Jesus (6:30).

If Thomas thought Jesus to be dead, he could not address his demand to him. He certainly could not have been asking the disciples to produce proof. Indeed, if he thought the proof possible, his unbelief could not exist. Thomas' words in 20:25 are more likely a

⁷⁹ See the following: Schnackenburg, *John* III, 330; Bultmann, *John*, 694–695; Brown, *John* XIII–XXI, 1045; Lindars, *John*, 614; Lüdemann, *Resurrection*, 164; Barrett, *John*, 476; Jacob Kremer, "Nimm deine Hand," 2164; de la Potterie, "Genèse," 42. etc. Léon Dufour states that Thomas, because of his Jewish background, requires that there be a strict physical continuity between the world of the living and the world of the dead. He therefore "wishes to verify that it is the one and the same Jesus he had known previously (*Resurrection*, 188). Dorothy Lee sees Thomas' demand as indicative of a positive desire to meet the risen Lord in faith (*Partnership*, 43).

sarcastic expression of unbelief than a request for proof. He rejects the possibility of Jesus' resurrection.⁸⁰ He does not demand to see it. Furthermore, one would be misunderstanding John's presentation of Jesus throughout the gospel if he or she would suppose that Jesus condescends to fulfill Thomas' *desires*.⁸¹ Rather, through the sign he becomes through his resurrection, he transcends and changes Thomas' limited mode of perception.

A Comparison of 20:25 and 4:48

Thomas' statement of disbelief shares much in common with the words Jesus speaks before healing the royal official's son. In 20:25, Thomas says, "Unless I see . . . I will not believe" (ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω . . . οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω). In 4:48, Jesus addresses the group in Galilee, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe" (ἐὰν μὴ . . . ἴδητε, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε).⁸² A comparison of the two verses sheds much light on this investigation. As noted above, it is unlikely that Thomas was demanding to see signs and wonders. His statement is rather a sarcastic expression of incredulity at the announcement of his fellows.

Both 4:48 and 20:25 portray typical, flawed, human points of view. The members of the crowd to whom Jesus addressed his statement in 4:48 are criticized for a fascination with the miraculous. Jesus' words indicate that he is not concerned with the desires of the crowd

⁸⁰ Thomas refuses to accept that which falls beyond the pall of human reason. He does not make "signs and wonders" a precondition to belief as Koester suggests (*Symbolism*, 71).

⁸¹ Compare with Bultmann, *John*, 696.

⁸² Léon-Dufour postulates that the literary contact between the two constitutes an intentional allusion. In both cases John wishes to criticize those who demand demonstrations of the marvelous. He goes on to say that John draws a contrast between this sort of faith and the exemplary faith exhibited at the tomb by the beloved disciple (*Lecture IV*, 246). Schnackenburg voices a similar opinion (*John III*, 330) as do Brown (*John XIII-XXI*, 1046), Bultmann (*John*, 696), Boismard ("Rapports entre Foi et Miracles," 361), Fortna (*The Fourth Gospel*, 245-246) etc. For a detailed survey of these opinions see Chapter Two of this book. As noted in Chapter Two, the most notable exception to this line of thinking comes from Loren L. Johns and Douglas B. Miller. They note that in John's gospel the combination of the particles οὐ and μὴ most frequently precedes a solemn proclamation on the part of Jesus where the condition following the οὐ μὴ is a desirable one. They therefore suggest that 4:48 be read in a similar way and that seeing signs and wonders be considered desirable since it produces faith ("The Signs as Witnesses," 530-531). The flaw in this interpretation is that, in the verse following 4:48, the royal official repeats his request that Jesus come down and heal his son. He therefore took Jesus' statement to be a rebuke of his request.

or with the desires of the royal official.⁸³ He is concerned with “belief” (4:48). John concludes the healing of the official’s son by stressing that the healing produces faith. There is no indication that John criticizes this faith. Rather, he notes in only positive terms the faith attained by the official and his household (4:53). He does criticize the desires of humans *before* they undergo the transformation that faith brings about, not the resultant condition of faith.

Similarly, Thomas’ statement depicts a negative, world-bound point-of-view, of which John is surely critical. His critical words, however, are indicative of Thomas’ state *before* he comes to believe. As in the case with the royal official, the reader sees that Jesus’ concern is for Thomas’ faith (20:27b). Jesus tells him, “‘Become believing.’” John narrates the change Thomas undergoes in order to depict the profound effect the risen Lord had on him.⁸⁴ John does not mean to devalue Thomas’ climactic confession (20:28), a confession that encompasses the faith of his community (cf. 1:14).

The Appearance to Thomas (20:26–29)

After John relates to his readers Thomas’ unforgettable remark, he continues his narration by describing the disciples’ gathering a week later. “Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them” (20:26a). John makes special note of the fact that Thomas, the unbeliever, the failed result of the disciples’ first attempt at evangelism, is present. Otherwise all is the same as it had been when Jesus appeared a week earlier. The doors are again closed (20:26b).

Once again, “Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be to you’” (20:26c). He then addresses Thomas directly, “‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out you hand and place it in my side; do not continue to be unbelieving, but believing’” (20:27). With his response, the doubter gives the most remarkable confession of Jesus’ divinity in the gospel. “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (20:28). “Jesus said to him, ‘You have believed because

⁸³ Giblin, “Suggestion,” 204–206.

⁸⁴ Thomas changes. According to John, entry into the life of faith presupposes change (1:13; 3:3, 5). See Keck, “Derivation,” 275–282.

you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (20:29).⁸⁵

Comparison between 20:26–29 and 20:19–23

Commentators have long noted that with Jesus’ appearance to Thomas, the doubter receives no more proof of the resurrection than did the other disciples.⁸⁶ The parallels between Jesus’ appearance to the ten and his appearance to Thomas are considerable. In the first appearance, the doors were locked (τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων) when Jesus came and stood in their midst (ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς μέσον). In the appearance with Thomas present, the doors are again locked when Jesus comes and stands in their midst (ἔρχεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον).

In the first appearance, Jesus greets the disciples by granting them peace (εἰρήνη ὑμῖν). In the appearance to Thomas, he gives the same greeting (εἰρήνη ὑμῖν). In the first appearance, Jesus displays his wounds (ἔδειξεν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῖς). In the appearance to Thomas, Jesus tells him, “‘Bring your finger here and see my hands [ἴδε τὰς κεῖράς μου], and bring your hand here and put [it] into my side [βάλε εἰς τὴν πλευράν μου].’”⁸⁷ These similarities are significant since they indicate that the evidence Jesus presents to Thomas is identical to that which he already had given to the other

⁸⁵ As I outlined in the first two chapters of this book, Jesus’ words in 20:29 have long served as the linchpin for the interpretation of this passage. In my own analysis, I shall defer interpreting this verse until I have established how the story of Thomas functions in terms of the gospel as a whole.

⁸⁶ The other disciples also heard the declaration of a witness (20:18). John never explicitly states how Mary’s words sat with them. Indeed there is no reason to suppose that Thomas was not present during Mary’s testimony.

⁸⁷ There is no reason to suppose that Thomas did probe Jesus’ wounds. As we have seen, Thomas’ statement was a sarcastic denial of belief, not a demand to touch Jesus’ wounds. Even if one supposes that his statement was a demand, there is still little reason to suppose that Thomas probed the wounds. John has already demonstrated that Jesus was a palpable reality (20:17) and that he bore the wounds of the crucifixion (20:27). If he wanted to make the point that Jesus’ wounds were indeed real, tangible wounds, he would have made a point to say that Thomas indeed touched them. The words of Jesus connect Thomas’ belief specifically to his act of sight: “‘You have believed because you have *seen* . . .’” See Bultmann, *John*, 694, n. 7; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 385. Lindars notes that Jesus’ statement in 20:27 is “clearly ironical” (*John*, 614). If he did touch the wounds, one can reasonably suppose that it was an act of reverence, not an exploration for tangible truth. And if one must imagine that Thomas touched the wounds before believing, it is still the act of Jesus in presenting the wounds that brings about Thomas’ turnaround.

ten disciples.⁸⁸ The deliberate parallels in the language indicate that the experiences are parallel.

In both appearances Jesus fulfills the intentions he declared before his crucifixion. Thomas, as did the other ten, heard Jesus' statements regarding his return to his disciples (14:28–29; 16:16). He too heard Jesus' promise of peace and would here be expected to remember it (16:4) and associate it with his return to the Father (14:27–28; cf. 20:17) and his conquering the world (16:33). Thomas' confession is informed by Jesus' preparatory words to his disciples.⁸⁹

The appearances differ on two significant counts. In the appearance to the ten, John narrates Jesus' second irenic greeting (20:21a), his missionary command (20:21b), his giving the Spirit (20:22) and his bestowal of the power to forgive sins (20:23). None of these are featured in the appearance to Thomas.⁹⁰ In the appearance to the ten, John narrates no speech uttered by the disciples in reaction to seeing their Lord risen. He simply states that they rejoiced at the sight (20:20b). In the appearance to Thomas, however, the one who once doubted voices the gospel's ultimate confession of faith (20:28).

Pattern of Testimony and Contact

Thomas' confession comes as the climax of a progressive revelation of the Lord's identity. When Mary visits the disciples with news of the resurrection she identifies the risen Jesus as "the Lord" (20:18). So too, when the ten tell Thomas of their experience, they identify Jesus as "the Lord" (20:25). After Jesus appears to Thomas, however, he confesses: "my Lord and my God." The reader should

⁸⁸ See Bultmann, *John*, 696.

⁸⁹ See below under the heading "The Appearance in Light of Jesus' Will."

⁹⁰ John makes deliberate reference to the fact that the appearance to Thomas comes eight days after the first appearance to the disciples. This timeframe is, of course, suggestive of the Lord's Day in the Christian liturgical practice and is significant for this study on several counts. First, it suggests the regular presence of the Lord in the Christian liturgy (see Barrett, *John*, 476; Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 1025; Schnackenburg, *John III*, 331). Second, it suggests that the content of Thomas' experience is no less significant than that of the other disciples. Although John does not specifically note that Thomas receives the Spirit or the missionary command, the Sunday timeframe suggest that the circumstances are the same. He receives no less than the others. The blessing Jesus bestows upon future believers (who will no doubt participate in the Christian liturgy on the Lord's day) indicates that they are no less blessed than the original disciples. Thus, it would be presumptuous to assume that Thomas receives any less than the others.

here recognize a familiar Johannine pattern. As in the cases of Nathanael (1:45–51) and the Samaritans in 4:39–42, John narrates a scene where testimony regarding an encounter with Jesus is given (20:17b–18). He then narrates a personal encounter between Jesus and the one[s] who received the testimony. In this pattern, the personal encounter corrects a mistaken or inadequate interpretation of the testimony (cf. 1:45–49; 4:42).⁹¹ By again employing this pattern, John stresses that Jesus deliberately acts to bring about faith and that he alone is its source. It is not the words of others that bring about faith, but, rather, it is the action of Jesus behind the words. Jesus comes to be known simultaneously as both the proactive cause of faith and its object. The two cannot be separated.

The Appearance in Light of Jesus' Will

From the beginning of the gospel, the reader has seen that God's glory is revealed only through Jesus and in accordance with his Father's will (cf. 1:33; 3:12–13, 27, 34; 5:19, 30–32; 6:15, 38–40, 65; 7:28b–29; 8:26–29, 38, 54; 9:31 etc.). All of the events in Jesus' life unfold according to his purpose alone (cf. 13:1, 27; 14:21b; 17:1–2, 5; 18:1–11). Indeed, Jesus' will is the force that propels John's narrative from start to finish. The reader has seen over and over again that Jesus' saving purpose transcends both human intention and human comprehension.⁹² In relationship to the human perspective, against its backdrop, John has clearly outlined the trajectory of Jesus' will. The reader has followed that trajectory to this climactic point in the narrative.

The disciples have been “sent” by Jesus (20:21). The reader knows from Jesus' prayer to his Father that he intends that others are to come to believe “through their word” (17:20). Yet, with Thomas'

⁹¹ When Philip tells Nathanael of Jesus, he identifies him as “the one about whom Moses wrote in the law” (1:45). After Nathanael meets Jesus, and Jesus demonstrates a supernatural insight into Nathanael's affairs, Nathanael identifies Jesus with language that surpasses the testimony of Philip. He calls him “Son of God, King of Israel” (1:49). The Samaritan woman tentatively identifies Jesus as the Messiah (4:29). After their personal encounter with Jesus, those to whom she had testified display a deepened insight. They identify him as “the Savior of the World” (4:42).

⁹² The pattern of suggestion, negative response . . . demonstrates this well. See Giblin, “Suggestion,” 210–211.

response to their word (20:25), the reader sees the Lord's own intent apparently frustrated. The reader knows, however, that Jesus' purpose will not be thwarted. He will not lose a single one of those whom the Father has given him (cf. 10:28; 17:12–19). The news of the resurrection transcends Thomas' ability to comprehend, just as Jesus' revelatory actions had transcended the worldly perceptive abilities of the characters he encountered throughout the narrative. The old problem remains: "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth and of the earth he speaks" (3:31). The message lies beyond the grasp of the worldly-wise Thomas.

Jesus, however, appears in the room a second time and addresses Thomas directly with words that recall his statement of unbelief. "He said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side . . .'" (20:27a). In light of what the reader knows about the motivations of Jesus' actions (especially as revealed in the pattern of suggestion, negative response, positive action), he or she is unlikely to suppose that Jesus has come to fulfill a request of Thomas.⁹³ Rather, the reader must suppose that Jesus is fully aware of Thomas' situation and comes specifically to remedy it according to his own purpose (10:28–29; 14:3–4, 18–20; 16:1, 7–16, 20–25; 17:1–2, 5, 6–8, 11–12, 15–26). Jesus' direct reference to Thomas' words⁹⁴ lets the unbeliever know that he understands him perfectly (cf. 1:48–51; 2:23; 4:17b–19; 20:16). He thus reveals to Thomas his transcendent insight. John here uses Jesus' relationship to Thomas to reveal Jesus' identity. The Jews have long recognized God as the one who sees into the hearts of humans (e.g., 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39). Jesus is here depicted in terms of this divine role.

Jesus' insight into Thomas' heart recalls a theme the reader has seen twice before. As in the encounters with Nathanael and the Samaritan woman, Jesus' knowledge of Thomas' thoughts brings Thomas to a deepened insight into Jesus' identity. The parallel with

⁹³ Beasley-Murray's suggestion that Jesus "takes up Thomas' challenge" is not consistent with the manner in which John presents Jesus throughout the gospel (*John*, 385).

⁹⁴ As noted above, Léon-Dufour detects a structural parallel between Jesus' insight into the heart of Thomas (20:25, 27) and his insight into the heart of Nathanael (1:47–51). See *Lecture IV*, 246–247. He states that the pattern that John presents in the encounter with Nathanael comes full circle with the appearance to Thomas (*Lecture IV*, 247).

the call of Nathanael is especially striking. Both Nathanael and Thomas reject the testimony of others because the testimony is not commensurate with their view of the world (1:46; 20:25). In both instances, a personal encounter with the Lord brings not only an acceptance of the original testimony, but an insight into Jesus' identity that goes beyond the original testimony (1:49; 20:28).

The words of Thomas' confession are formed not by the sight of the risen Jesus alone. Thomas, along with the other disciples, is to be one of Jesus' chosen witnesses since he was with him "from the beginning" (15:27). Jesus has specially prepared him. Jesus himself told the disciples, "All that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (15:15).

He told them these things beforehand in order that they would "remember" what he had said (16:4). Their remembrance was to bring them to believe in his relationship to the Father. Before he was betrayed he told them, "I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you will believe that I am [ἐγώ εἰμι]" (13:19; cf. 8:28, 58; 10:30; 14:7). When Thomas identifies the risen Jesus as his Lord and his God, he does so in accordance with the preparation he received through the words Jesus spoke (5:17–29; 6:35, 45, 48–51, 62; 8:28, 58; 9:5; 10:17; 10:30; 12:45; 14:3–4, 17–19; cf. 12:17) and the works Jesus performed (10:26; cf. 2:11; 6:16–21). Jesus' words to Thomas must be understood in the light of Jesus' purpose. That he is able to fulfill this purpose tells the reader something of his identity.

Jesus Bids Thomas to Change

A close examination of John's language in 20:27b reveals the author's concept of how Jesus bridges the gap that separates Thomas from the truth. After showing him his hands and his side, Jesus says to Thomas, "do not be faithless but believing"⁹⁵ (μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός). This unusual construction merits close attention. Belief, as we have seen, is a central theme in John's gospel. In John, the verb "to believe" (πιστεύειν) appears ninety-eight times.⁹⁶ Yet, verse

⁹⁵ Translation of RSV.

⁹⁶ As compared to 11 times in Mt., 14 in Mk., and 9 in Lk. (Schnackenburg, *John* I, 558). The noun πίστις does not appear in John.

27 contains the only occurrences of both the adjectives “unbelieving” (ἄπιστος) and “believing” (πιστός). John, therefore, must go out of his way to express Jesus’ command to Thomas with these words.⁹⁷

In this verse, Jesus does not simply tell Thomas to “believe.” He does not tell him to “do” something. Rather, Jesus tells Thomas to “become” something, to become believing. Literally, the statement reads: “‘Do not become [γίνου] unbelieving but believing.’” The verb “to become” (γίνομαι) is here in the present imperative. When the present imperative is used in a prohibition, it forbids continuation of an act.⁹⁸ Jesus tells Thomas, “‘Stop being unbelieving; become believing.’” Jesus commands Thomas to be someone new, to change his mode of existence. He is to be no longer “of the earth.” He is to “become” a child of God (cf. 1:12).

Thomas’ response (20:28) makes it clear to the reader that he has undergone such a personal change. His words indicate that he does not view the risen Jesus as the reanimated body of a greatly revered teacher, nor as a mere prophet or earthly messiah (cf. 6:14–15). Thomas understands himself to be standing before the source of his life (1:3). For the first time he realizes the meaning of Jesus’ relation to the Father as Son. He recognizes Jesus not merely as “risen” but as “the resurrection and the life” (11:25), the source of his being (1:3, 12, 13). The individual he thought to be dead, he now recognizes as the source of all life. Radically changed, Thomas can only utter, “‘My Lord and my God’” (20:28).⁹⁹ The vision of faith presupposes a new sort of life (cf. 1:13; 3:5), a life made available to Thomas only through the action of Jesus (3:14–15).

John demonstrates that, in order for Thomas to gain this vision, his earth-bound mode of being had to be transcended by the only one who has access to heavenly realities, God’s son. John presents faith not as something that can be generated from within the potential believer, as an act of the human will. It can only come through

⁹⁷ It is widely accepted that this entire scene betrays the hand of the evangelist. The vocabulary (except for ἄπιστος and πιστός) and style are in keeping with his. The interest in “faith” is also in keeping with the interests of our author. See Schnackenburg, *John* III, 328–329; Brown, *John*, 1031.

⁹⁸ Brown, *John* XIII–XXI, 1026; Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, no., 246; BDF nos., 335–336

⁹⁹ Brown emphasizes the change that Thomas undergoes by comparing this passage to Hosea. “I will say to not my people, ‘You are my people’; and he shall say, ‘Thou art my God’” (2:23b). See Brown, *John* XIII–XXI, 1048.

the will of God, in an act of grace.¹⁰⁰ The reader here sees Jesus revealed as the agent of Thomas' change.

Concluding Remarks Regarding Analysis of 20:24–29

John clearly wishes his readers to understand that it is indeed Jesus' desire that his disciples bring others to faith through their testimony (17:20). Yet, in distinguishing Thomas' act of faith from the disciple's testimony, John uncovers a region in which Jesus is seen as both the agent and object of that faith. Believers experience Jesus as God's son, as the one who transcends earthly modes of perception (6:46) and who allows them to participate in another sort of life, the life of a child of God (1:13). The living presence of the Son is experienced in that transforming act in which faith is seen as a possibility. The one who comes to believe is utterly changed in the realization that, at the moment of this experience, he or she is in the presence of his or her God: the Creator of all life (cf. 1:1–4; 11:25; 20:28).

As a character in the gospel, Thomas functions specifically to illustrate the radical nature of the change brought about by the experience of the risen Christ. John employs Thomas only in scenes where he engages in conversations in some manner related to Jesus' death (11:16; 14:4–5). In each of his earlier appearances, John portrays him as one who cannot see beyond a this-worldly point of view. Only personal contact with the risen Jesus remedies his lack of perception.

John tells his readers that Jesus' plan for Thomas involves more than his personal conversion. As one of Jesus' chosen disciples (15:16), Thomas is to be a witness connecting Jesus' earthly mission "from the beginning" (15:27) to his status as the living Son of God. It was Jesus' plan to return to the disciples after his crucifixion (14:19; 16:16). As his chosen ones, they bear witness to his life and to his words, as well as to the glory of his resurrection. Thomas' conversion therefore gives the reader an insight into Jesus' identity as it is revealed in the fulfillment of his faith-giving purpose.

Thomas' original incredulity regarding the resurrection assures the reader that he had experienced Jesus to be a real human being. But, after the resurrection, there can be no better witness to Jesus' con-

¹⁰⁰ See Kremer, "Nimm deine Hand," 2166.

tinued existence as the living "Son of God" than Thomas; for he was utterly changed by the experience.¹⁰¹ In the transformation of the one who insisted that Jesus was dead the reader can best see that Jesus lives. As he did with Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (20:11–16), John has makes it clear that a personal encounter initiated by the risen Lord constitutes the only effective means for this transformation. Against the backdrop of Thomas' doubt, John most effectively displays the nature of belief.

The Beatitude for Future Believers (20:29)

John ends his account of Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus by shifting the focus of his narrative from the faith of Thomas to the faith of the reader. After Thomas pronounces the gospel's climactic confession of faith, Jesus addresses him, "You have believed because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and believe" (20:29).¹⁰² This verse, as we have seen in the first two chapters of this book, has long been seen as a critique of Thomas' faith. But even those who see it as such have simultaneously seen in it words of encouragement for future believers.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ignace de la Potterie notes that Thomas' role as one of Jesus' chosen apostles (20:24) necessitates that he see the risen Lord. He refers to Paul's authenticating claim, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1) as evidence that apostleship required such a vision ("Genèse," 41).

¹⁰² There is a long running debate over whether the first clause in this verse (ὅτι ἑώρακάς με πεπίστευκας) should be taken as a question or a statement. Presumably the interrogative form would reflect a less flattering stance towards Thomas' response than would a declaration. Grammatically, either is possible. The context and the perfect tense of πιστεύειν, however, suggest that it should be taken as a statement. The closest parallels in John are found in 1:50 and 16:31. In both of these examples, the faith in question does not encompass an adequate understanding of Jesus. Nathanael's understanding cannot be seen as fully formed since he is told he will see greater things (1:50b–51). In 16:32, Jesus follows his question regarding the disciples' faith with a prediction that they will abandon him. Furthermore, the tense in these two examples is different. In both, πιστεύειν is in the present tense. In 20:29, it appears in the perfect tense and thus suggests a "firm faith" (Schnackenburg, *John* III, 334). Additionally, the words of Thomas' confession indicate that the faith he has attained encompasses an adequate understanding of Jesus' identity. Finally, since the verse is intended to encourage future believers, it would be awkward to compare the faith they are to attain with a questionable faith.

The following read this verse as a statement: Schnackenburg, *John* III, 334; Barrett, *John*, 477; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 386; Brown, *John* XIII–XXI, 1027. Bultmann (*John*, 695) and Lindars (*John*, 616) read it as a question.

¹⁰³ The clearest example of such an interpretation is that of de la Potterie. He

Jn. 20:29 is the final verse in John's narration of the Good News. Following it comes the gospel's statement of purpose: "These are written that you may believe and that believing you may have life in his name."¹⁰⁴ One statement concerning belief follows another. The close conjunction of the beatitude to the statement of purpose suggests that the primary reason for the beatitude is to encourage future believers not to disparage Thomas' firm faith.¹⁰⁵

With 20:29, John inspires future believers, instilling in them the confidence that their faith will be equal to that seen in Thomas' climactic confession ("My Lord and my God"). They will share the *same*¹⁰⁶ faith that the original apostles shared (cf. 17:20–24!). They too are blessed (20:29b).¹⁰⁷ They too behold Christ's glory (1:14). John's readers can expect that, without seeing, they too can attain the faith of the first witnesses. They can experience Jesus to be risen just as Thomas did.

The manner in which John distinguishes the testimony of the disciples from the conversion of Thomas clearly shows that their testimony regards a real, living person. The testimony and its object are not the same. This is not to say that testimony does not inform the experience of the risen Jesus. Nor is it to say that the testimony itself cannot be the vehicle by which one experiences Christ risen. It is to say however, that the object of faith has an independent existence apart from the testimony. Faith according to John stems from an encounter with the living Son of God.

The story of doubting Thomas illustrates John's idea that faith comes as an act of Jesus' will. Jesus enables the success of Christian

asserts that the theological focus of this narrative is *double*. The future members of John's church will attain faith without seeing. Their faith, however, is based on the vision of faith shared by Thomas and the other apostles. Nonetheless, Thomas stands at a crossroad and should have accepted the testimony of the disciples and thus incurs the Lord's reproach ("Genèse," 42). Against de la Potterie, I must point out that Thomas' role as witness presupposes his having seen. In addition, it must be noted that Thomas' role as witness is formed in accordance with the Lord's pre-stated plan.

¹⁰⁴ Regarding the tense of πιστεύειν, see Chapter Five of this book.

¹⁰⁵ The only other example of a beatitude in the gospel (13:17) does not address the question of faith, and so it would be incorrect to compare the two directly. One can note, however, that it too is a message of exhortation.

¹⁰⁶ Even Bultmann stresses that Thomas receives no more proof than the other disciples (*John*, 695–696).

¹⁰⁷ Beasley-Murray thinks the verse is meant to tell future believers that, even though they have not seen, "their faith is none the worse for it" (*John*, 386).

testimony. This is in keeping with the themes the reader has seen expressed over the course of the gospel narrative (cf. 4:34–38; 6:16–21; 15:1–8).¹⁰⁸ Jesus causes his disciples to succeed. Faith comes as a result of Jesus' action and according to his plan for salvation.

Relation of the Epilogue (21:1–25) to John's Narrative

The gospel's epilogue (21:1–25) provides the reader with the earliest commentary by the Johannine church regarding the work of the evangelist.¹⁰⁹ Its author (or authors), too, emphasizes that it is Jesus himself, still living, who directs the activities of his followers.¹¹⁰ This chapter contains the final appearance of the risen Lord to his disciples. Through the miracle of the miraculous catch, the disciples are caused to recognize Jesus (20:1–14). The miraculous catch has long been recognized to represent the church's missionary activity.¹¹¹ It indicates that Jesus himself is at work in the church's mission and is revealed through it.

In 21:1, we read that it is the author's intent to illustrate the "manner" (οὕτως) in which Jesus again revealed himself to the disciples after the resurrection.¹¹² The language employed by the author indicates that the manner of Jesus' activity in this final appearance is proactive. He "manifested himself" (ἐπαγγέλωσεν οὕτως) to his disciples (21:1; cf. 2:11; 17:6). His disciples do not recognize him by physical sight; nor does he identify himself to his disciples as he had in the previous appearances.¹¹³ Rather, the beloved disciple recognizes him through the miracle of the miraculous catch (21:6–7). Jesus himself is to be recognized in the work of the church. The ensuing dialogue between Jesus and Peter reinforces the same idea. Jesus himself directs the activity of the church (21:15–19).

¹⁰⁸ Giblin, "Miraculous Crossing," 100.

¹⁰⁹ Although it appears in all of the ancient manuscripts, Chapter 21 is clearly a later addition to the gospel penned by someone other than the evangelist (cf. 21:24). See Schnackenburg, *John* III, 341–351; Barrett, *John*, 479–481; Léon-Dufour, *Lecture* IV, 271–273. The fact that it appears in all of the manuscripts indicates that the early Johannine church considered Chapter 21 integral to the gospel's witness.

¹¹⁰ Giblin, "Miraculous Crossing," 101; Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission*, 220.

¹¹¹ Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission*, 220; Brown, *John* XIII–XXI, 1097.

¹¹² The text is closely tied to the preceding episode (20:24–29); Thomas is specifically named among the seven disciples present for this appearance. See Schnackenburg, *John* III, 342–344.

¹¹³ Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission*, 220.

More than simple proximity connects Chapter 21 to the resurrection narratives in Chapter 20. The three disciples explicitly singled out in Chapter 20 (Peter, Thomas, and the beloved disciple) are again mentioned Chapter 21. The themes of the church's work and its direction by Jesus also appear in both chapters (20:21, 23; 21:1–19). It is likely that the author of Chapter 21 deliberately elaborates on these themes as he recognized them in Chapter 20 and in the gospel as a whole. It is Jesus himself who acts through the church and directs its work; just as it was Jesus who, according to his own design, ensured that Thomas (one of his chosen witnesses) came to faith. As John had revealed Jesus in terms of his relationships with characters in his text, so too is Jesus revealed in terms of his relationship with humanity, specifically through his relationship to the members of his church.

Conclusion

At the outset of this book I indicated my intent to demonstrate that 20:24–29 serves to reveal Jesus' identity rather than to criticize the manner in which Thomas comes to faith. Thomas' behavior functions not as an object lesson in the incorrect way to come to faith but rather as a backdrop against which Jesus' identity as God's son can be perceived.¹¹⁴ I have demonstrated that this view of Thomas' role in the gospel is in keeping with John's use of characters throughout the gospel. Each encounter between Jesus and a character in the gospel serves primarily to reveal some aspect of Jesus' identity. John establishes this pattern of revealing Jesus in terms of his relationships in the Prologue (1:1–18) and extends it throughout his narrative. Following the narrative from its beginning prepares the reader to understand that Thomas' confession results from Jesus action and comes in conformity to his will.

I have traced several major themes over the course of the gospel and have demonstrated that 20:24–29 is best understood in the context of these themes. These included the failure of humanity to com-

¹¹⁴ That the reader should gain an insight into Jesus' identity is, after all, the gospel's stated purpose (20:31). It is therefore sensible to examine each of the gospel's scenes with an eye to the manner in which it furthers this purpose.

prehend adequately Jesus' divine perspective and purpose,¹¹⁵ Jesus' transcendent insight into the hearts and lives of those he encounters,¹¹⁶ the transformative power of this insight,¹¹⁷ the reliance of humans upon divine action for success in discipleship,¹¹⁸ and the overall independent and self-determined nature of Jesus' actions. John also develops a thematic pattern whereby human testimony regarding Jesus' identity is augmented and deepened by a personal contact with Jesus.¹¹⁹ Each of these themes has had a direct bearing upon the analysis of encounter with Thomas.

According to John, the tendency on the part of some to judge from the point of view of the world causes them to misunderstand Jesus (cf. 3:31; 6:15; 8:37; 9:41). This flaw prevents them from living by faith and therefore precludes them from participating in the life Jesus offers. This human flaw is overcome only by the act of God's will and through the actions of Jesus (3:27; 6:44) as he reveals his and his Father's glory (5:19–47; 8:28; 9:3; 10:25, 37–38). Through his depictions of both Jesus' word and his works, John demonstrates that Jesus transcends the merely worldly point of view. As Jesus demonstrates his transcendence, he reveals the true limits of human perception and thus the truth of humanity's dependency upon him as the source of life. In the sign he becomes through his resurrection Jesus breaks through Thomas' world-bound point of view and thus exposes to him the limits of his own nature. Having witnessed Jesus as the one who enables this understanding, Thomas can thus confess Jesus as *his* Lord and *his* God. Thomas' personal experience of Jesus as Lord and God parallels the communal experience of the members of John's church. For they too confess, "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten Son from the Father" (1:14).

¹¹⁵ (cf. 1:10; 1:45–51; 2:13–22; 3:1–21; 4:1–42; 7:42; 8:22, 27; 11:16; 14:5, 8; 16:18).

¹¹⁶ (cf. 1:45–51; 2:23–25; 4:18, 39; 5:6; 20:16, 27).

¹¹⁷ (cf. 1:45–51; 4:18, 39; 20:16, 27).

¹¹⁸ (cf. 4:31–38; 6:16–21; 15:1–10; 21:1–14).

¹¹⁹ (cf. 1:43–49; 4:39–42).

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WILLIAM BONNEY,
Ph.D. (1996) in New Testament
Studies, Fordham University,
is Professor of Theology
at Providence College.

THIS BOOK IS A LITERARY STUDY OF John's gospel focusing upon the doubting Thomas story's role as its climax. The author analyses the Thomas episode in light of the roles played by the characters Jesus encounters throughout the gospel. They serve primarily to reveal how Jesus' identity as God's life-giving son is perceived in relation to humanity. For those who believe, he is simultaneously both the cause and the object of faith. In John, <faith> and <life> are inseparable. The life that faith engenders flows from Jesus alone, and the faith achieved by his followers comes only as a result of his causative action. Thomas' change from unbeliever to believer is the climactic illustration of this idea.

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